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CHRISTIAN
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CONTENTMENT



FEATURE

ALLEVIATING
THE PERILS OF
WORRY

PARENTING

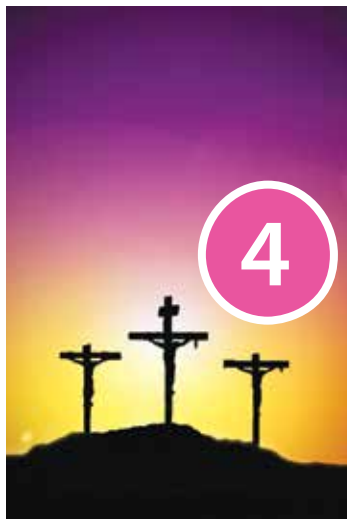
LOGICAL
CONSEQUENCES

GOSPEL

DOES GOD
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HEALTH

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers

After almost four years working on the magazine committee, the time has come for me to pass on the editor's baton. I have no doubt that the magazine will continue to go from strength to strength under the capable care of Tami. I hope that she enjoys the challenge as much as I did and is as blessed through the work.

Despite all the fun I had working with wonderful, Godly people to produce the magazine I must say I am so looking forward to enjoying the magazine as a reader who knows nothing of the effort that has gone on behind the scenes!

Blessings

Sheila

It is with sad hearts that we say goodbye to Sheila; with many grateful thanks for her dedication and commitment to the magazine over the last four years. We pray that God will truly bless the work of her hands as she moves on to enlarge her tent pegs as Jabez so fervently prayed.

I had one of those selah moments a few weeks ago - contentment was easy because the whole world seemed to be dancing. This stood in stark contrast to a few hours later with a power cut, afternoon chores looming, no water and niggly kids. Then it became a choice, a hard one, to remain grateful and focused on God's loveliness.

I've always thought Easter should be a natural season of contentment amongst believers as the focus on Christ's sacrifice emphasises God's incredible generosity toward us. Sin and sacrifice may not always be a fashionable subject, but it is a timeless one.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8
We are excited to be able to include a free dvd feature on Easter with this magazine. There is no copyright on the dvd so please show it to as many as you can!

Tam Davy



About The Christian Counselling Centre

We are a Registered Trust. Our team of counsellors, drawn from many denominations, are all trained to an Advanced Level in Biblical Counselling. Counselling is open to anyone (whatever their religion) who would like to talk confidentially to a counsellor. The counselling costs \$15 a session, payable in advance. To see a counsellor, please phone the numbers below. If you would like to attend any of our seminars, courses, etc. please register and make payment at the Centre.

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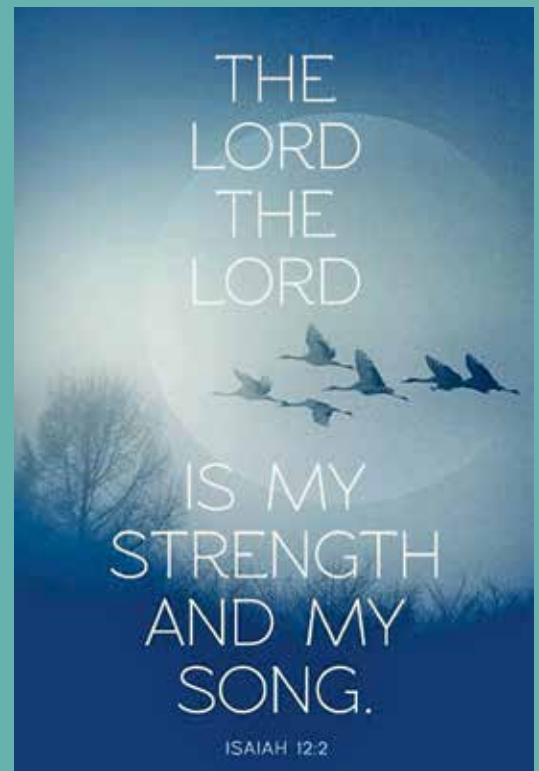
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 : The Centre Magazine

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The views expressed in this publication don't necessarily reflect those of the Christian Counselling Centre.

What is the Relevance of Easter to Our Daily Lives?

by Ian Wilsher



Easter is the most significant event on the Christian calendar, it's the time in which we remember Jesus' death and resurrection. But what are the implications of Easter for our lives today?

Firstly, as we celebrate Easter, we acknowledge that without Jesus' death and resurrection we would not have any assurance of our salvation. He died to pay the price for our sins so that those who believe in Him can be forgiven. God our Father raised Jesus from the dead, to say to us that His sacrifice was acceptable and that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so too will we be. But there is more. Jesus told His disciples, "that He must be killed and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31)

Jesus then called the crowd and said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it" (vs 34)

Jesus is saying His way is the way of the cross and if we want to be His disciples, if we want to follow Him, then our way must also be the way of the Cross. He is saying life, real life, is found by taking up our cross and following Him.

But how does this work practically?

Salvation and Growing into His Likeness

Let's first look at the whole subject of salvation. If we try to be accepted by God through our own efforts, by trying to be good, we will fail. No one can keep the law, we all fall short. So, we need to accept this and receive Jesus' righteousness for ourselves.

This is also true in terms of our growing into the likeness of Jesus, our sanctification. We cannot do it on our own and must rely on Jesus. There is no way that we can be like Jesus in our own strength, so we die to our own efforts and receive the resurrection power of Jesus in our lives. He lives in us. This is the only way that we can be like Him. The life that God calls us to live is impossible in our own

strength. How can we love our enemies? How can we forgive some of the things that need forgiving? How can we turn the other cheek? How can we go the extra mile? How do we live in this troubled world without anxiety, and so on? Jesus' way is to give up trying to do these things in our own strength, to 'die' to our self-sufficiency and to trust Him to live in us. As we die to our own efforts and trust Him instead, His resurrection power becomes the force that enables us to do these things. It's a daily dying to selfishness and self-sufficiency and trusting God to live in us.

Overcoming Hardships

This principle is true for coping with the troubles and difficulties of life. The apostle Paul talks about his hardships and acknowledges that they were more than he could cope with. He says, "We do not want you to be uninformed brothers about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

We see how Paul comes to the end of himself, he realises he cannot cope in his own strength and so relies on God, "who raises the dead." He trusts in God's resurrection power to be able to endure those hardships. Later in that same letter, Paul says, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:10) This is the death and resurrection principle worked out in difficulties.

Overcoming Moral Weaknesses

This death and resurrection principle is particularly relevant when dealing with problems. Take those besetting sins that we struggle to overcome. If for example, you have an anger problem and repeatedly resolve to change, only to find that you lose your temper again and again. The answer is this death and resurrection

principle. We recognise that we cannot overcome this weakness in our own strength and that we are helpless and powerless over it. We nail it to the Cross and surrender to God and trust Him to help us, knowing that He, by His resurrection power, will raise us up to live like we should. This holds true for any weakness or sin.

Addictions

This principle is the only way to overcome addictions. The first three steps of AA follow this principle. The first step is to recognise that your life has become unmanageable and you are powerless against the addiction. You die to your own efforts, and die to your will power. The second step is recognising that God is there to help and He is able. The third step is to hand your life and will over to Him. So, you let go of trying to overcome the addiction in your own strength, you die to self-sufficiency and I trust that God, by His resurrection power will enable you to live as you should.

Repent and Believe

Jesus preached the Kingdom of God. He said we are to "repent and believe the good news." (Mark 1:15) Repentance is turning away from our selfishness, our self-sufficiency and self-centredness. It is dying to self, denying ourselves, losing our life. We then believe the good news of Easter, that Jesus, by His resurrection power will live in us and will raise us up and enable us to live as He desires. The Christian life is impossible to live in our own strength. It's His life in us that enables us to overcome.

The Scripture says, He "always leads us in triumphal procession." (2 Corinthians 2:14) At Easter we celebrate the fact that we can live victoriously over the power of sin, of circumstance, of addictions and things of this world by His resurrection power. But we will never experience His resurrection power, if we don't first identify with Him in His death.

Ian is a Director of the Christian Counselling Centre.

DOES GOD PUNISH US?

BY IAN WILSHER

"God is punishing me!" - people sometimes say when they suffer, like when they are sick or lose their job.

Is this true? Does God punish us? Certainly we deserve His punishment because all of us have broken His commandments. And as a result, we suffer from feelings of guilt.

But no! God does not punish us! This is because He has already taken all the punishment for all our sin on Himself.

When Jesus hung on the Cross, one of the last things He said was, "Tetelestai - It is finished!" This Greek word is an accounting term and it means, 'paid in full'. Jesus was declaring that His suffering was coming to an end and He had paid the debt for your and my sin completely. There is no more punishment needed.

We do deserve to be punished for our sin. Scripture says, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 3:23) The payment for our sin is death - both spiritual and physical. However Jesus, in His love for you and me, died in our place. He took the rap for our sin. Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians, "He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was

against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2: 13-14)

Justice has been served. Punishment has been meted out. He has done it all. It costs us nothing, but it cost our Lord Jesus everything. Such is His love for you and me. "Because by one sacrifice (Jesus' death), He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." (Hebrews 10:14) The Lord does refine and mature us in the crucible of our suffering but our suffering is not punishment for sins.

So, what do we need to do to receive this outrageous gift? Just accept it by faith. Paul says, "For by grace are you saved through faith." (Ephesians 2:8) This is His indescribable gift to us. This gift is not earned, not paid for, just received. We are saved by faith plus nothing! You receive it by placing your trust in Him and accepting what He has done for you on the Cross. The Apostle Peter tells us, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree... by His wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

Ian is a Director of the Christian Counselling Centre.



I Can't Get No Satisfaction

By Ian Wilsher

Those of my generation, and perhaps others who enjoy the 60's music, will remember the catchy Rolling Stones song: "I can't get no satisfaction... but I try and I try..."

In case you find these lyrics rather inane, let me remind you that they express the same sentiments as does King Solomon "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher, "Utterly meaningless! Everything is Meaningless!" (Ecclesiastes 1:2) He talks of the futility of labouring under the sun; the folly of pursuing wisdom, which he says is a chasing after the wind. He sought pleasure and laughter but found it foolish. He tried cheering himself up with wine (2:3) and undertook great projects (houses and vineyard, gardens and parks). He enriched himself with silver and gold, even gathered a harem, which he says delights the heart of man (6:8) Yet in 2:11 he says, "When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless – a chasing after the wind, nothing was gained under the sun."

We can, like Solomon, go through life believing that there is something that will make us happy: "If I just have... then I'll

be happy" - maybe it's that house in the right area, or that holiday that others are able to have, or if only I had X-amount of money or a certain person in my life, was married, had children... We will find, as Solomon did, these things can and often do give us pleasure for a while, but then after a while they no longer give us satisfaction. The pursuit of anything from this world ultimately leads to disappointment and disillusionment.

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John Ortberg in his book *Love Beyond Reason* quotes art critic, Robert Hughes, who describes the American society as 'a culture of complaint.' Isn't that interesting? The land of plenty, that has 'everything,' is filled with complaining people. I remember being in a hotel lobby, so glad to be enjoying the facilities, when we heard an American man complaining loudly, "I paid five star prices, I expect five star treatment!" Material wealth can cause people to become entitled – all their desires should be fulfilled and when they inevitably are not, they see

themselves as victims, dissatisfied with work and relationships, with life itself.

Even as Christians we can think that God owes us, if He loves us, surely He will give us what we want - that house or job or wealth or relationship? We can become cynical, even hostile, demanding of God or others if they don't come through for us. This is especially true in the context of the Prosperity Gospel (which isn't the Gospel, by the way) where people are encouraged to 'have faith' that God will give them the riches of this world.

It is God Himself who subjected this world to futility and decay. (Romans 8:20-21) Things get old and break and rust and rot and get stolen and lose their appeal. God did not make these things to bring us satisfaction.

It was Augustine who said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine, *Confessions* Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst." (John 4:13-14) We get temporary relief from our thirst from things of this world but will only really find lasting satisfaction in Him.

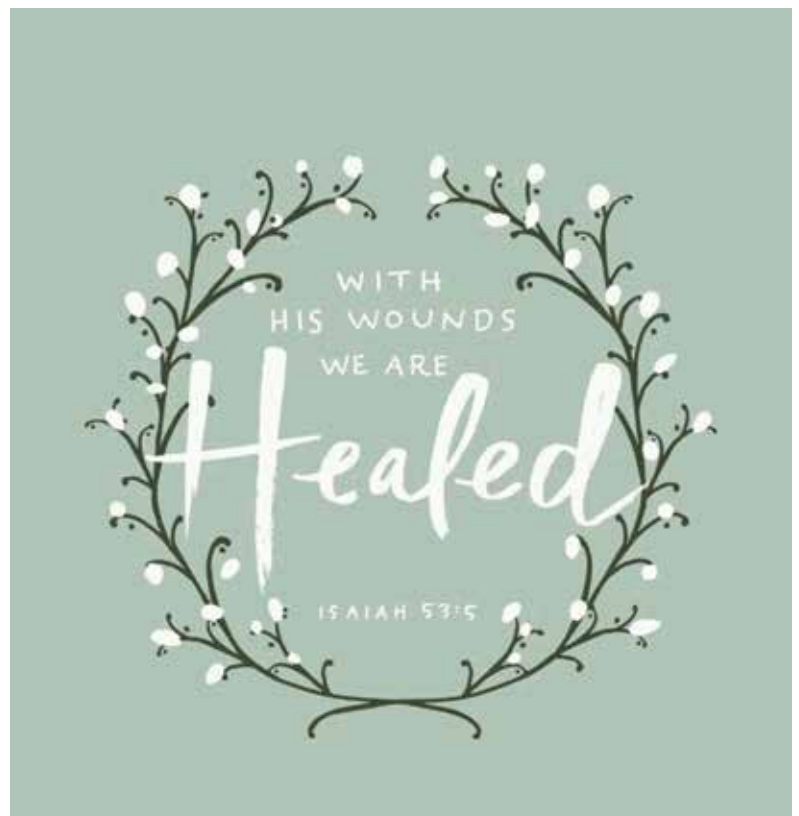
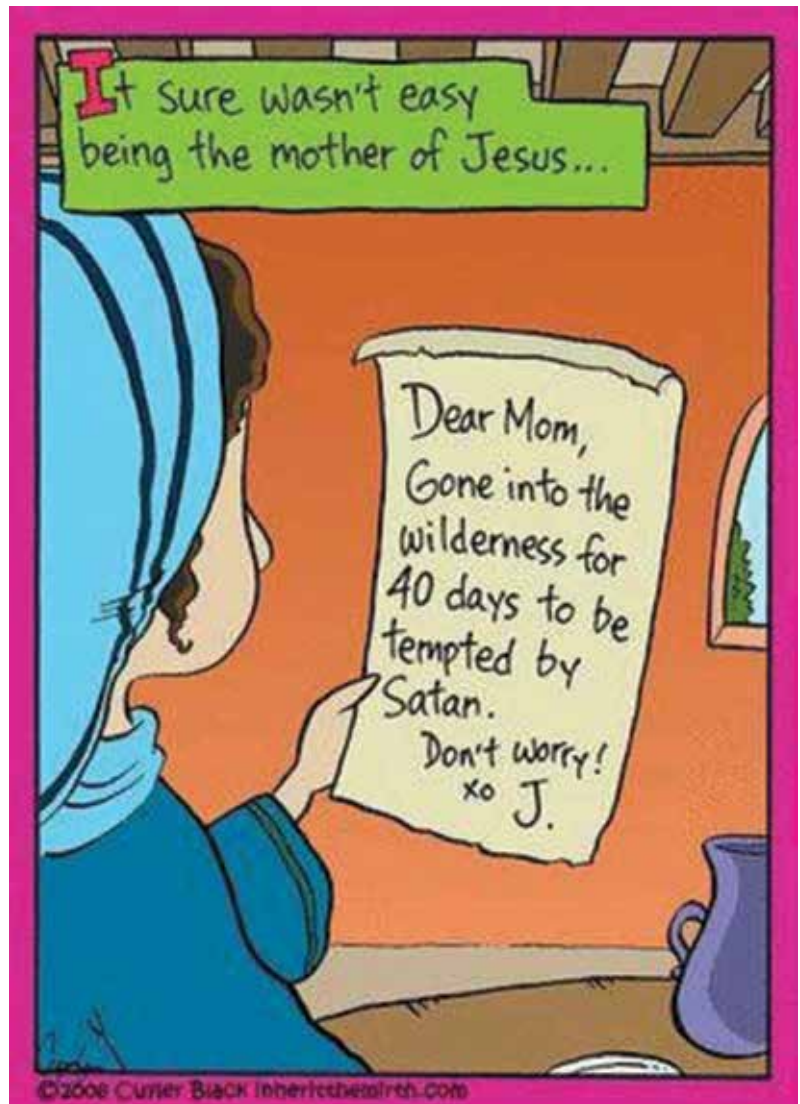
How do we find this satisfaction? Jesus raised His voice at the Feast of Tabernacles and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." (John 7:37) It is coming to Him and receiving (drinking) from the Lord, His love for us, His peace, His presence, His grace. It is an ongoing drinking of the Lord. When we become aware of that emptiness within us, that pain, instead of filling the gap with social media or music, activity, busyness, sex or drink - we need to turn to Him, receive from Him. As you read His Word, receive it for yourself, personalize it. Psalm 103:4 then becomes, "Praise the Lord... who redeems **my** life from the pit and who crowns **me** with love and compassion."

As this world disappoints and hurts - allow that disappointment and discontent and emptiness to drive you to Him.

The verse "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13) is well known. The context, however, is much less known. Paul is saying that he has learned the secret of finding contentment (satisfaction) in any and every situation - in need or plenty, well-fed or hungry. *This* is what he can do in Christ who strengthens him.

Have you learned this secret? It's the key to finding that satisfaction that the Rolling Stones couldn't find. It's a satisfaction and contentment and fulfilment that is not based on worldly circumstances - single, married, rich or poor, childless or not, living in Zimbabwe or America. It's a satisfaction in Him.

Ian is a Director of the Christian Counselling Centre.



Contentment Is An Attitude

By Leonard Makoni

“He who is able to accept everything gladly from the Lord - including darkness, dryness, flatness - and completely disregard self is he who lives for Him.” Watchman Nee

The adaptation of *Men's Drive Time Devotional* below most aptly describes contentment.

Two men were both seriously ill. They occupied the same hospital room. One of the men was allowed to sit in his bed for an hour each afternoon. His bed was next to the wall away from the corridors. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back not able to sit up at all. The men spent hours talking about their lives, their families, their joys, disappointments and dreams in life. Every afternoon the man whose bed was by the wall took time to describe the beautiful scenery outside. The man who had to lie flat on his back lived for those moments when his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the outside world. The man by the wall would tell his new-found friend how his window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. He would paint a beautiful picture of ducks and swans sailing on the lake and children playing with their model boats. He would give details of lovers who walked arm-in-arm amid flowers of all colours of the rainbow; grand old trees that

graced the landscape and a fine view of the city skyline that could be seen from a distance. As the gentleman by the wall described the picturesque views, the man on his back closed his eyes and saw all the details in his mind.

One day, as the gentleman by the wall described the beautiful world outside, an alien thought entered the thoughts of the man on his back: “Why should he have the pleasure of seeing everything while I never get to see anything”? It just didn't seem fair to him. As days passed into weeks and it seemed impossible for him to see the sights the gentleman at the 'window' described, his jealousy developed into envy that deteriorated to resentment. He got consumed by the desire to be by the 'window' to see the beauty outside. He became sour and deeply sad as the resentment became bitterness.

One day a nurse arrived early in the morning only to find the lifeless body of the man by the wall. They carted the body away and made the bed by the wall ready for the next patient. The following morning the man on his back asked to be moved to the wall. The nurse obliged, making him as

**IT ISN'T
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HAPPY**

comfortable as possible and left him to himself. With great anticipation, slowly and painfully the man brought himself up on his elbow to see the beautiful park his late friend used to describe. Satisfied with himself, he thought he would have the joy to see it all for himself. He slowly turned to look through the window only to see a blank wall. Puzzled and disappointed, he asked the nurse if he was still in the same room and place where the dead man used to describe a park outside. The nurse confirmed that they had not changed the room. The man wondered loudly what could have compelled the man to go to pains to describe such beautiful views when all there was, was a blank wall. The nurse postulated that it could only have been his desire to be an encouragement, for he was blind and could not have seen even the blank wall.

Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* said, "It isn't what you have or who you are or where you are or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about it." The blind man brings this out very clearly. He created a hopeful world he had never seen which a man with physical sight could never see. The other man, created his own misery and deprived himself of the joy of the blind man's blessing because of his disposition, not the circumstances he found himself in.

Many of us struggle with the lack of a sense of identity, security or self-worth when we look at other people. We lose focus of our identity, our security and value in God. Paul writing to the church at Philippi says "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:12-13) To Timothy (and us too) Paul said "...

godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." (1 Timothy 6:6-7) The writer to the Hebrews urges us to "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what one has, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

These passages address the three key push/pull forces into discontentment: identity, security and value in God. The next time you sense some discomfort, remember to:

- **Give thanks to the Lord for who and what you are**
- **Rest in God's providence and praise God for what you have**
- **Trust God for His grace and take pleasure to live in His power in any situation**
- **Be preoccupied to give of self to others in service.**

As for you and I, it makes a difference to follow the admonition from the Psalmist: "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desire of your heart." (Psalm 37:3-4)

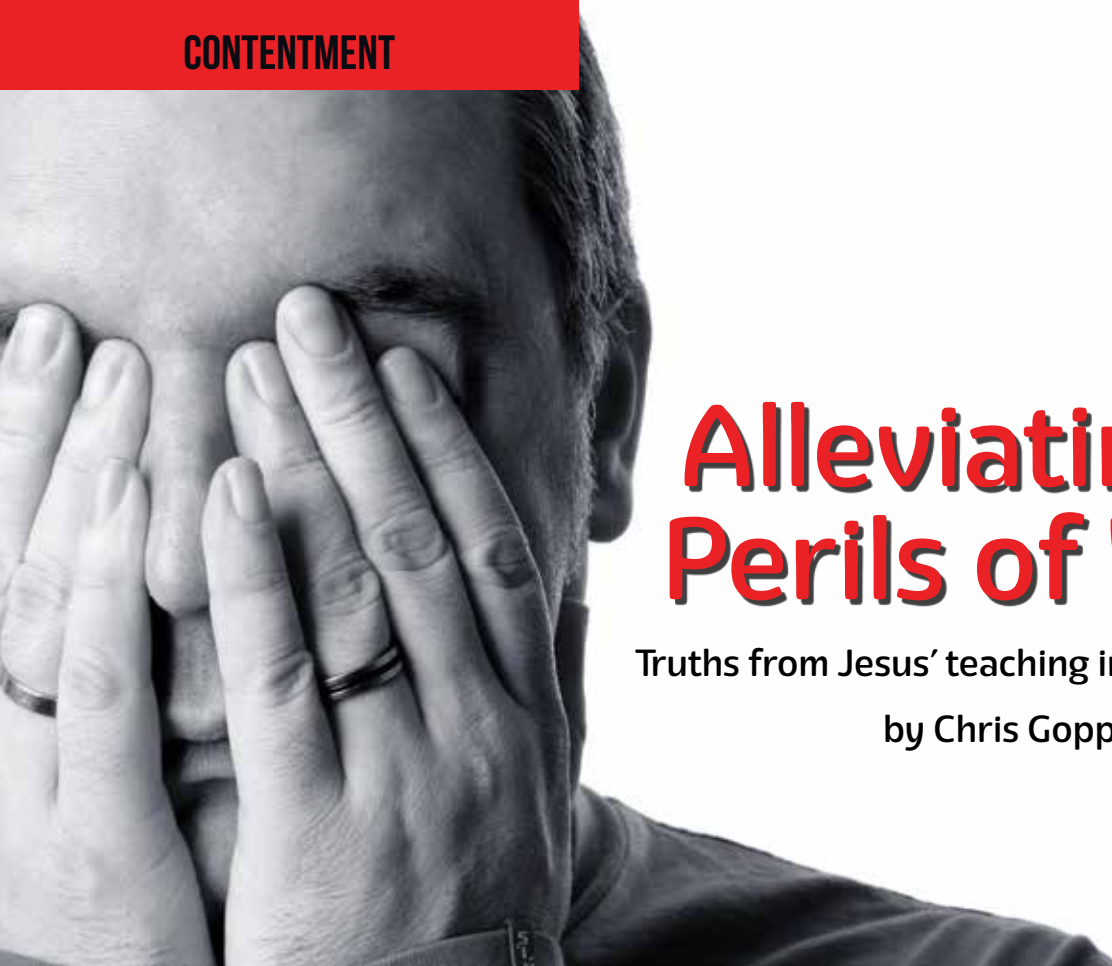
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Alleviating the Perils of Worry

Truths from Jesus' teaching in Matthew: 6:19-34

by Chris Goppert

Riaan Manser is a name made famous by an epic solo cycle ride around Africa. He became even more famous after circumnavigating Madagascar by Kayak. The interesting thing is, this intrepid adventurer found himself succumbing not to fatigue or celebrity status after his famous endeavours, but to the peril of worry about whether or not he would have enough sponsors for his future exploits.

Now, whether it is the fear of being carjacked, contracting a terminal illness, losing a loved one, or living in a failed economy - some type of worry looms on our daily horizon. The spectre of uncertainty ever looms before us... All our high tech advances can't help. In fact, they exacerbate the problem. *The Economist* Mag (1st August 2015) observed, "Contemporary angst is inextricably tied up with living in an advanced, hyper-modern society."

The apostle Paul, having recognised in the 1st Century how susceptible even Christians can be to anxiety, wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)

Worry is a conflicted state of mind, characterised by brooding or over-thinking about every detail, irrespective of the circumstances that may or may not occur.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "Worry is a cycle of inefficient thoughts whirling about a centre of fear."

Her point? We need a trustworthy, fixed reference point beyond ourselves on which to focus, so as to offset worry.

Now, in Matthew 6:19-34, the Master Teacher and Mender of Hearts speaks to alleviating the threat that worry presents, by showing us how to maintain a fixed reference point or a singular heart devotion. He said three times in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not worry".

The reason worry attracts Jesus' attention is that the distracting pre-occupation about an uncertain future prevents His followers from facing today with a singular devotion. Another reason why Jesus addresses worry is because, if unchecked, the thin trickle of fear associated with worry can cascade into a raging torrent of despair.

So, the intent of this article is to help us dispel anxiety, particularly anxiety about how our needs will be met or how situations will turn out. You will see how the Bible directs us to maintain a singular devotion or fixed reference point.

I want to suggest that we can do this by what I term an overarching **Kingdom orientation**, which dispels the tendency to over-think or brood about matters that are beyond our control.

So important is the need for this singular Kingdom orientation, that Jesus exhorts us to have good eyes, full of light (vs 22) or practically speaking, a singular heart loyalty or faith in God, not money, to bring security.

So, if we want to offset anxiety about provisions with trust and peace, we need to have a correct faith focus - that is, something that will enable us to remain steadfastly focused on the faithfulness of our King and His Kingdom rule.

What this means is that subjects of the Kingdom are to be so totally taken up with the reality of the presence of their King and His Kingdom's rule in their lives, that nothing can dissuade them from an unwavering trust in God's beneficent care.

I think we can see that without a deliberate set of our heart and mind as a shield against worry, that the trickle of fear about the future and our security will overwhelm our hearts and paralyse our spiritual vitality.

So, how do we orient everything to the King and His Kingdom?

1) Pay it forward, by laying up your treasure in Heaven's safe treasury.

In 1 Timothy 6:19, we read that we are to lay up treasures for ourselves as a firm

foundation for the coming age. And why we do this? So that we may take hold of the life that is truly life.

2) Resist the ever present, downward pull by the world to fortify assets at all costs (yes, take reasonable hedges against inflation, but don't over-think and stress about the outcome). We cannot serve both God and money, as it will lead to a divided heart loyalty.

Do we have the right treasure, in the right treasury with the right treasurer? If so, we can alleviate or at least begin to mitigate the tension and discover life-giving freedom as God intended it to be.

3) Do not worry. Why? There are three reasons: God feeds, He knows and since tomorrow will deal with itself, we do not need to deal with it.

Essentially, if we want to lay hold of life, we'll need to begin the practice of laying up our treasures in Heaven. When our treasure is given over to the care of a

faithful Master (Treasurer), we are then free to give ourselves in turn, to living out Kingdom principles without care or with regard to the security of our treasure or any future provisions.

Jesus makes clear that if God cares for the temporary birds and the flowers, how much more will He care for the eternal believer? (v. 30)

4) Adjust our priorities, (v. 33) we do this by seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

You see, if we run after (give ourselves over to) matters related to food, drink and clothing as the pagans do, we'll find that there will hardly be any time left for the concerns of the Kingdom, because the pressures to give ourselves to money will drive us on and on and on to have just a little more and to set up more hedges about it...and as a result? We'll never know if we are secure enough, because we'll be so distracted with entrusting our energies and treasures in the wrong direction.

Again, if we have too many earthly resources, we may spend our time protecting those assets at all costs, not

realising the consequence of not heeding the wisdom of Proverbs, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches ... Otherwise I may have too much and disown You and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or become poor and steal." (Proverbs 30:8-9)

5) Rest assured that since Jesus promises that our needs will be met, we can assume the provision and rest in the peace that comes from that knowledge (v. 33). The promise from our King is this, "All these things will be given to you as well."

I close with a insightful quote and a well-known verse,

"The more we worship, the less we'll worry." Rick Warren

"You will keep him in perfect peace, him whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

Chris and his wife Joyce, served as missionaries with TEAM from 1973 pastoring various churches and teaching at HTC. They are now in California.



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OVERCOMING ALCOHOLISM

Dear Reader,

I am Kumbi and I am an alcoholic!

I write this testimony to you reader with the hope that my story makes a difference to your life for the better just as it has done to my life. This is my story of how I failed my way to success.

The journey of life is like a sailing boat in the middle of an ocean, the wind blows all the time and we set the course which either takes us home or far away from home. I was stuck in the middle of the ocean with a load that the wind could not push, so far from home I could not see the shore.

I drank and abused alcohol for 18 years of my life and somewhere along that journey I became an alcoholic. I started drinking when I was 13 years old and only ended my despicable drinking career at 31 years after 12 years of trying to be sober. At the age of 19 I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. The search of intended sobriety had begun.

I will share my testimony in 3 parts, 1) How it was, 2) What happened, 3) How it is now.

1) How it was

For some unknown reason, I loved alcohol with all my heart and soul. I would do anything to get my hands on it. Alcohol was priority. I would spend rent money and food money on the bottle, everything else came second in my life, including family, loved

ones, work and regrettably my prayer life as well. Without a doubt this brewed a lot of neglect in areas of my life where nurturing was important. I was the family member that you would never see in the family photo albums.

My life had become unmanageable. I had started keeping death at a reasonable distance, both physical death and emotional death. Dying, dead and death are three different events of life. You can start dying and be dead before your death. I wanted to stop consuming alcohol but I could not. The feeling of hopelessness made me feel so desperate that I wanted to give up trying and accept my alcoholism disease and do nothing about it till the end of my life.

Since I was employed, I would drink non-stop from Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. I would report for work on Tuesday with a terrible hangover and smelling of alcohol. This cycle went on for many, many years. I had a lot of verbal warnings and a warning letter, however such is not enough to refrain an alcoholic from drinking.

2) What Happened

At the back of my mind I have always heard a voice whisper to me, but I ignored this voice for a very long time. I have always known that there is something greater out there. After I hit my rock-bottom, the voice that whispered to me was the only thing I had left in a life filled with misery. This quiet voice was the good Lord reaching out to me.

For many years, I thought help was out of reach, yet hope and help was within me. All I had to do was to open my heart and admit that I was powerless over my addiction and submit my will into the care of God.

The desire to change my ways became profound. The decision to change was overnight but I knew the process would take long. In November 2015 I became a member of a Christian twelve step group therapy program called **Revive**, which is open to anyone struggling with anything from addiction, depression, anxiety, rejection, bi-polar, codependency, pornography, divorce, food issues, anger, un-forgiveness, etc. This soul therapy has helped me keep sober, sane, balanced, decent and regulated. I am now on my way back to a normal life and with the grace of God, this journey is shorter compared to all those years I spent running away from myself. Through Revive I continue working on all the defects I had picked up along the way such as anger, depression, greed, being judgmental of others, knowing it all, laziness, being manipulative, negative thinking, opinionated, chronic procrastination, resentment, secretive, undependable and a lot more.

3)How it is now

Life for me has certainly been transformed in a very noticeable way. **Revive** and my sobriety has helped me redefine my whole philosophy. I now stand guard at the door of my mind. I now think carefully and guard where I go, what people I meet, what I see, what I hear and the conversations I have.

I strongly feel that God wants to use my story to tell His story for which I am grateful.

One random day I was driving with my boss. I decided to let him know that I had decided to work on my addiction through **Revive**. As soon as I finished saying this, he looked at me and said, "Well done, I have noticed you have been sober for about four months now." At that moment, I realised that God was at work in my life. My boss had seen the change. God will always give you people who believe in you even if you don't believe in yourself, people who will be patient with you until your own belief kicks in.

Last December, my brother and his wife travelled to South Africa, they asked me to baby sit their two daughters. When people notice such change, it's amazing. I cried when that happened because a year ago, they would not have bothered to ask me for such a favour, my life was in shambles and I could not be trusted with such a responsibility. It's amazing and encouraging when people see change in you before you even see change in yourself.

Revive played a major role in my realisation that success is not in the things we get but rather, true success is found in who we become. I recommend **Revive** to anyone going through any life issues, hurts, addiction and hang-ups.

Revive meets every Friday evening from 6:00 pm – 8:00pm at River of Life Church in Eastlea in the main church. Contact: +263 772 534 218

May you also receive the grace of the good Lord so you can be who He wants you to be.

Kumbi is single, he works at SST Africa as a Senior Systems Consultant. He enjoys cycling, camping, writing and dwelling in God's word.



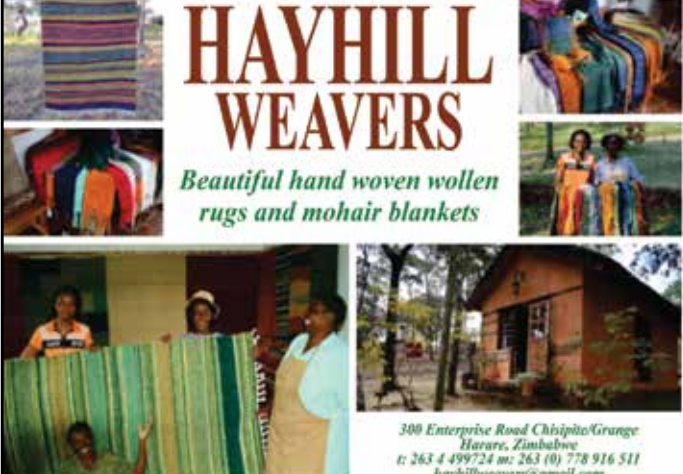
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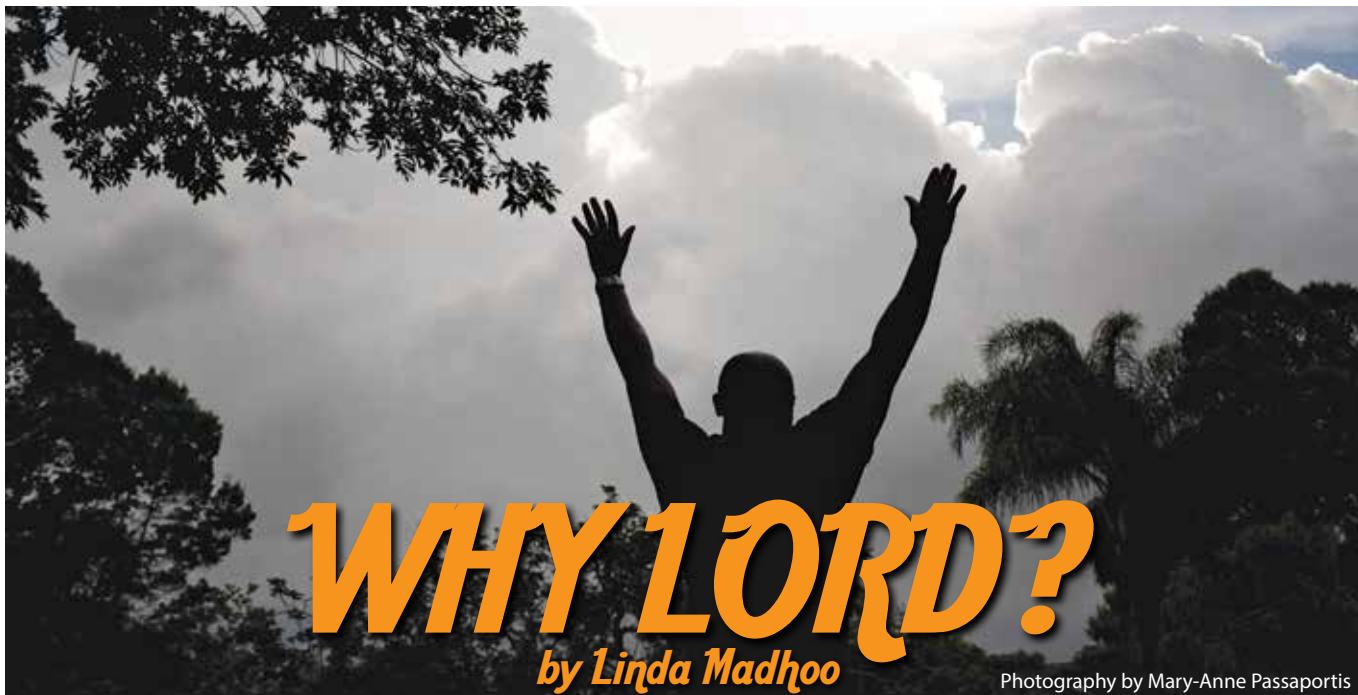
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WHY LORD?

by Linda Madhoo

Photography by Mary-Anne Passaportis

For me, the tragedy of Zimbabwe is not the politics, the economy, bond notes, police road blocks, water and power shortages, traffic and whatever other circumstances affect us. The tragedy of Zimbabwe is the breaking up of families, now living all over the world. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, all living on every continent of the world.

As I said goodbye to the last of my immediate family who were living in Zimbabwe, my beloved niece Lauren and her family, anger filled my heart. Why Lord?

Why do Zimbabweans need to leave their country? Why do other people around the world get to live their lives with their families? Why do they get to have a good Sunday roast together every week? Why do they get to spend Christmases and New Years and other special occasions together? Why do they get to do life together? Why Lord?

I'd also just returned home from spending three months in the USA with my new grandson Samuel James. It was a precious time watching him grow into the gentle, peaceful little soul who smiled every time he saw his Nana; a precious time sharing my daughter Natasha's life again after she'd been in the States for more than 10 years; a precious time getting to know my son-in-law Justin. And then goodbye. Why Lord?

I thought about my son Niall and his wife Armine who emigrated to Armenia 2½

years ago, taking with them my beautiful grandchildren Hannah now 4 ½ and David 2 ½ years. Another goodbye. Why Lord?

I thought about my precious siblings, Lynette, Rocky and his family, who left more than 10 years ago, to live in the UK and my sister Olga and her family who left 8 years ago, to move to South Africa with her family. More goodbyes. Why Lord?

I thought about other much loved family members and close friends. And I thought about other Zimbabweans' much loved families and friends. More goodbyes. Why Lord?

How could I carry on having the joy the Lord promised me when everyone I held dear to my heart was no longer here? How Lord?

And there was silence.

Wave after wave of sadness and grief crashed over me. And still there was silence.

I had no answers but I knew I had to remind myself of what I did know. What do I know without a shadow of a doubt?

• I know the Lord says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." (Isaiah 55:8) I may never understand. His ways and thoughts are far higher than mine.

• I know He knows the plans He has for us, plans for our good to give us a future and a

hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) He knows what He's doing and He acts for our good.

• I am comforted by knowing that His love is steadfast. He has always been faithful and He will always be faithful. I am not alone, He has told me He will never leave me. He will comfort me.

• I am encouraged by knowing that He says to me, "Do not fear for I am with you. Do not be discouraged for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will surely help you. Surely I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

• But what comforts me more than anything is the knowledge that as Christians one day, there will be no more weeping and no more tears and one day we will all be together in Heaven, where we will spend the rest of eternity together.

And so,

"Though the fig tree does not blossom and no fruit is on the vines; Though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; Though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, YET will I rejoice in the Lord I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer And makes me tread on high places." (Habakkuk 3:18-19)

Linda is a counsellor at The Christian Counselling Centre and a grandmother to three grandchildren.

Keeping the Faith

by Justice Marwisa

A couple of weeks ago, I came across a statement by someone who said, "God is the reason why, even in pain I smile; in confusion, I understand; in betrayal, I trust; and in fear, I continue to fight." As I reflected upon this I found myself considering the Apostle Paul's life and asked myself what gave him strength to continue standing despite the many difficulties he faced. I considered his encouragement to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12 where he says, "Fight the good fight of the faith." I then also looked at the fact that, at the end of his life, the Apostle Paul writes these fascinating words, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7) I then realised how important it is to keep the faith in the midst of the challenges we face.

The Apostle Paul was arguably a man whose Christian walk had been characterised by lots of highs and lows. This was a man whom many would love to be like when it comes to the way God used him. His illustrious journey in life saw him preach the gospel in many places including carrying out a number of unparalleled miracles.

However, this was only one side of his story. Scripture indicates that the Apostle Paul also went through many difficulties. For example, 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 says, "Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have

worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." With all that he had gone through, the Apostle Paul dares to say, "I have kept the faith." He even goes further to pen a lot of letters encouraging the churches to keep strong in the Lord.

We can surely learn something here from the Apostle Paul. With all that is happening around us, God expects us to keep the faith to the end. Certainly we will experience a number of good things in our lives. Yes, there will be many victories we will win throughout our Christian journey. But our walk with the Lord will inevitably have a lot of challenges as well. We might be attacked one way or another by people. Our children might fall sick. Our financial

situation might become quite desperate and so we might go hungry at times, or fail to meet certain obligations. We could be let down by those we love and maybe even a husband or wife might leave us. Our health might fail us. The list could go on and on. It is important for children of God to be prepared to face these challenges head on without losing their faith in God. As part of holding on to his faith, the Apostle Paul confesses in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

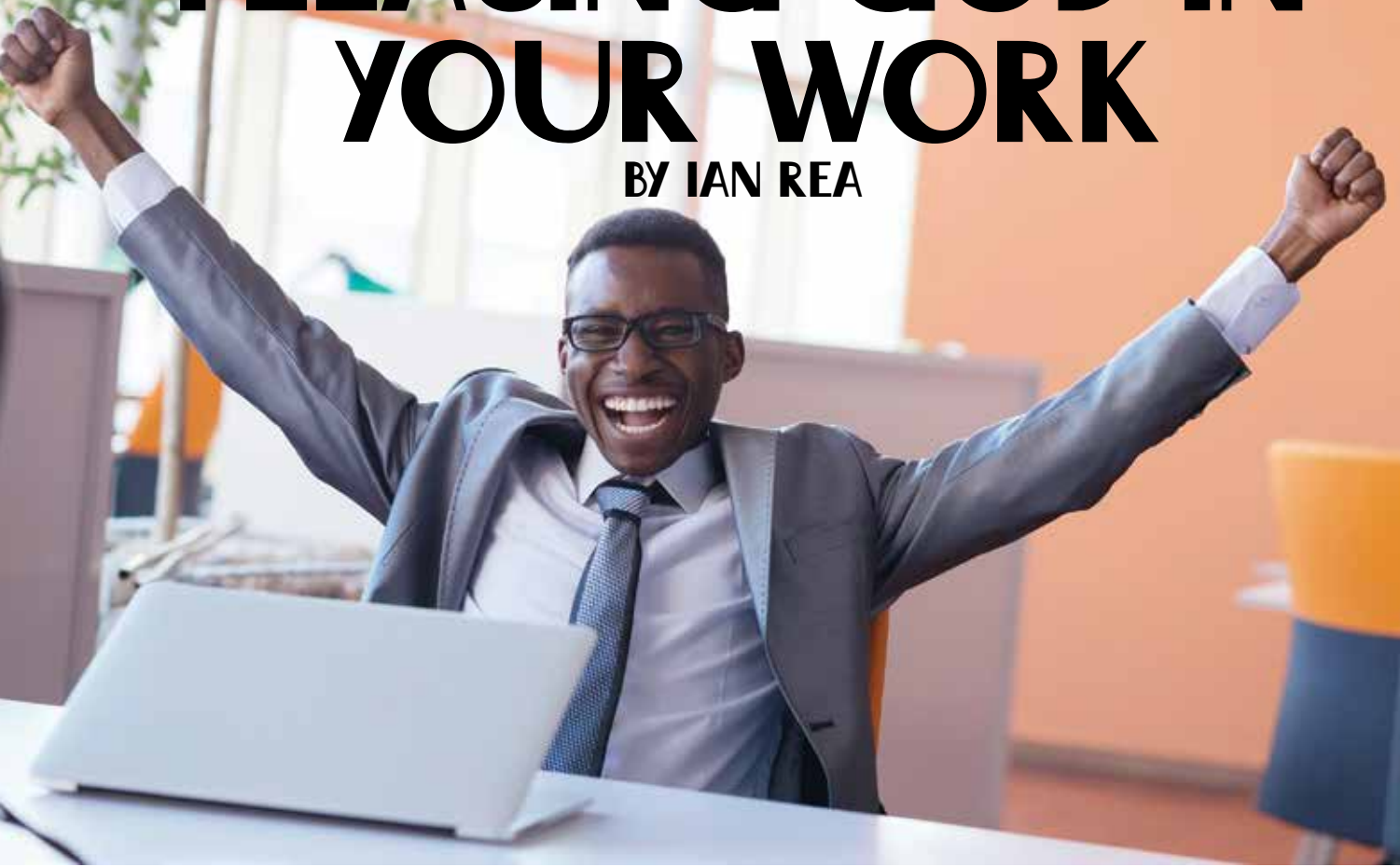
God expects us to continue standing upon His Word in the full assurance of His faithfulness to look after us regardless of what is happening. In Isaiah 43:2, God says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

Child of God, you will do well to heed the words of the Apostle Paul to keep the faith. Be encouraged to hold on to the confession of your faith at this time when it seems that we are in another turbulent period. The good news is that God is with us as we go through these difficult times.

Justice is a counsellor at The Christian Counselling Centre.

PLEASING GOD IN YOUR WORK

BY IAN REA



Not many of you should presume to be teachers ... because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

Being a teacher, writer and preacher, I find this warning rather sobering. In fact, sitting down to write an article like this requires – certainly in my case – a high level of courage.

But do not think you have been let off the hook because you are not a Bible teacher. God judges EVERY person's work impartially (1 Peter 1:17), and He "will give to each person according to what he has done" (Romans 2:6). Whether you are a cook, engineer, housewife, pensioner or accountant, your work will be judged. Yes, my work will be judged more strictly, but nevertheless, your work will be judged too!

The Apostle John described what mankind's court appearance will be like in Revelation 20:11-15. John's vision was, to put it mildly, momentous. He saw the dead – every person that had ever lived and died, both kings and commoners – standing before the great white throne of God, where they were judged on the basis of

two things: 1) what they had done, according to the records of each person's life, and 2) whether their name appeared in the Book of Life.

If you are in Christ you can be sure of the outcome of the second judgement. Your name will appear in the Book of Life and you will not suffer eternal separation from God. An eternity in the presence of God will be your infinite delight. But how will you fare in the first judgement? Paul highlights your possible predicament in the following way, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

It is essential, therefore, that you approach your work on earth with reverential fear.

There is much at stake – not your salvation, but certainly your reward. For this reason, I am getting into the habit of praying a prayer penned by King David in Psalm 19. David had written this psalm to glorify God and His law, so as he finished he wrote: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." (v14).

For David, the work of the moment was a psalm. For me it is this article. What is it for you? Whatever you are doing begin with prayer, asking God to help you please Him. God is your Rock. You can depend on Him to help you do God-glorifying work.

Further, God is your Redeemer. He is in the business of delivering people like you and me from our weakness and the limitations of the world so that we can build with gold, silver and costly stones.

Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer, may the work I have done and the work I am about to do be pleasing in your sight. Amen.

Ian is a Pastor at Harvest Fellowship Church.



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Myths of Happiness

By Tava Gwanzura

It is not uncommon to hear people talking about wanting to be happy, and making happiness their goal. Is there anything wrong with that? Before we can answer that question, we need to be clear on what exactly happiness is, but that's not easy, as being happy means different things to different people. People are made happy by a whole host of different things, and seek to find happiness in varying ways. Basically, happiness is an emotion, a feeling and can simply be defined as "feeling or showing pleasure or contentment" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). What gives pleasure or brings contentment can obviously be very different from one person to the next, but it is a place where we all want to be.

Now, as we all know, emotions are rarely if ever a permanent state. Our feelings often change with our circumstances and in response to what we may be experiencing or what may be happening around us, be it positive or negative. Happiness is no exception to this rule, and the truth is very few, if any, of us live in a permanent state of happiness. When something good happens to us, we feel 'happy', and when we experience something unpleasant we conversely feel sad or discouraged. The happiness we may have been feeling earlier quickly evaporates...

We also often expect other people to make us happy, especially those significant people in our lives, such as spouses, friends, boyfriends and girlfriends, etc. We look forward to 'happy' marriages and living 'happily ever after' with our spouses. Unfortunately none of us are perfect, and inevitably we do hurt and disappoint each other, and the 'happy state' fails to hold its own!

It is commonly said that 'money can't buy happiness', and I tend to agree with that, because I do not believe that it brings about any lasting pleasure or contentment. In fact, many people who do have the money or are materially comfortable end up dissatisfied if their sense of well-being is founded solely on money. Secondly, can emotions, including happiness, be bought and expected to last, especially given how fickle and fleeting they can be, and how easily they can fall victim to changing circumstances?

If our happiness is based on what is happening to us or around us, if it is governed by external conditions over which we have no control, then it is bound to be short-lived. As I write this article, I am facing many challenges in my personal life, but as I was saying to my best friend, I am also feeling very hopeful and encouraged. I

can honestly say that there is joy and peace within, and also excitement!

Just the other day, as I drove to pick up my children from school, I unexpectedly ran out of fuel. I used a kombi to and from the nearest service station, and was soon on my way again. I had travelled barely 100 metres when I realised I had a flat tyre! So I once again pulled over and began the business of tyre-changing, only to realise my wheel-spanner was missing! I then came across a socket spanner in my tool kit which fitted the wheel nuts – praise the Lord - but which didn't belong to me! I had no idea whose it was and how it got there, but it did the job!

In the process, I failed to make it to the post office to renew the car licences and was late picking up the children, but during the hectic stress of all of this, I made a decision to trust God, praise Him, declare His goodness and not allow myself to be defeated and overwhelmed by my somewhat adverse circumstances. I found hope and joy in the fact that God loved me and was there to help me as His child. I knew that my 'happiness' and my peace were not dependent on these events and other much more serious ones I was facing, but rather on my

relationship with Christ, on who He is and on who I am in Him.

Seeking after happiness ultimately results in disappointment and dissatisfaction because it is based on ever-changing circumstances and transient emotions.

Happiness can only be a by-product of something much more profound and fundamental, and that is our relationship with God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. Should we not rather seek the fulfilment that arises out of knowing Christ and depending on Him for all our deep needs? The Bible reminds us that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, and in that we can truly and always rejoice, secure and confident in the knowledge that no matter what we are going through, He will never leave us nor forsake us, but will see us through our troubles as we look to Him, trust in Him and walk in obedience to His will. That is the source of true happiness.

**IF OUR
HAPPINESS IS
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Tava is a Trustee and counsellor at The Christian Counselling Centre.

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Just as not every Zimbabwean will have visited all our provinces, not every American will have visited or stayed in, every one of the 50 states that make up the United States. Some will have not ventured out of their home state; many will have travelled to several; few will have been to all 50. However, what is clear is that each of the 50 states is very different from the others - some are very hot (with temperatures as high as 57 C) and others are very cold (with the lowest temperature recorded being -61 C); some are mountainous while others are flat. Some are predominantly urban, others rural; some are very fertile, others are definitely barren. Here in Zimbabwe we also live in very contrasting provinces or states - we have the dry, low-lying Zambezi Valley and the high places of the Eastern Highlands; we have the rugged Matopos and the rich Mashonaland farm lands. Hopefully people will enjoy living in the state that they are in!

Yet it is also fair to say that in every country there are two major states - the state of Plenty and the state of Poverty. Along with these states there are also the vastly different states of Adversity, Intensity, Diversity, Duplicity, Perversity, Animosity, Audacity, Popularity, Pomposity and many more. At different times in our lives we may well visit or live in such states - some hot (Anger), some cold (Bitterness), some mountainous (Challenges), others flat (Boredom), some fertile (Busy-ness), some barren (Jealousy).

Most of us would say that it is much harder to live in the state of Poverty - we reckon we could not survive without our material benefits. The reality is though, that many find it harder to live in the state of Plenty - even those who have much, do not find contentment. They always want more - more money, bigger cars, larger houses, more international caps. The fact is that people are not content in the state of Poverty and people are not content in the

state of Plenty. Solomon understood this but his solution to live in such difficult states was to avoid them - much as we are inclined to do today! "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:8-9)

Paul took a different and larger view when he wrote in one of his letters, "I have learned in whatever state I am to be content." (Philippians 4:11). It was perhaps a similar thought that we might see expressed in a very different context by Liam Lynch, in his punk rock song of 2002 called "The United States of Whatever." That view is echoed every day by teenagers today when they respond to situations or requests or upsets: "Whatever!" To some, that one word comes across as a dismissive, rude riposte; others think it signifies indifference and apathy. However, it can also be saying "It makes no difference if I do this or that. I will take whatever happens. I am not phased or fussed; I am not deterred or disturbed; I am not bothered. Whatever!"

If we can say (and mean) "Whatever!" to whatever state we are in, we have begun to learn the secret that Paul had found. We are challenged to be content in whatever state we find ourselves in, whether alone or in a crowd, in silence or with noise, with a pass or a fail, victory or defeat, love or hurt, sickness or health, richer or poorer. We are called to live in the Invited States of Whatever on the Continent of Contentment.

We do need to realize a few important facts about such contentment before moving on. We are to be content in the state, not with the state. We must not be content with injustice but we can learn to be content in a state of injustice (as Paul was on numerous occasions). Furthermore,

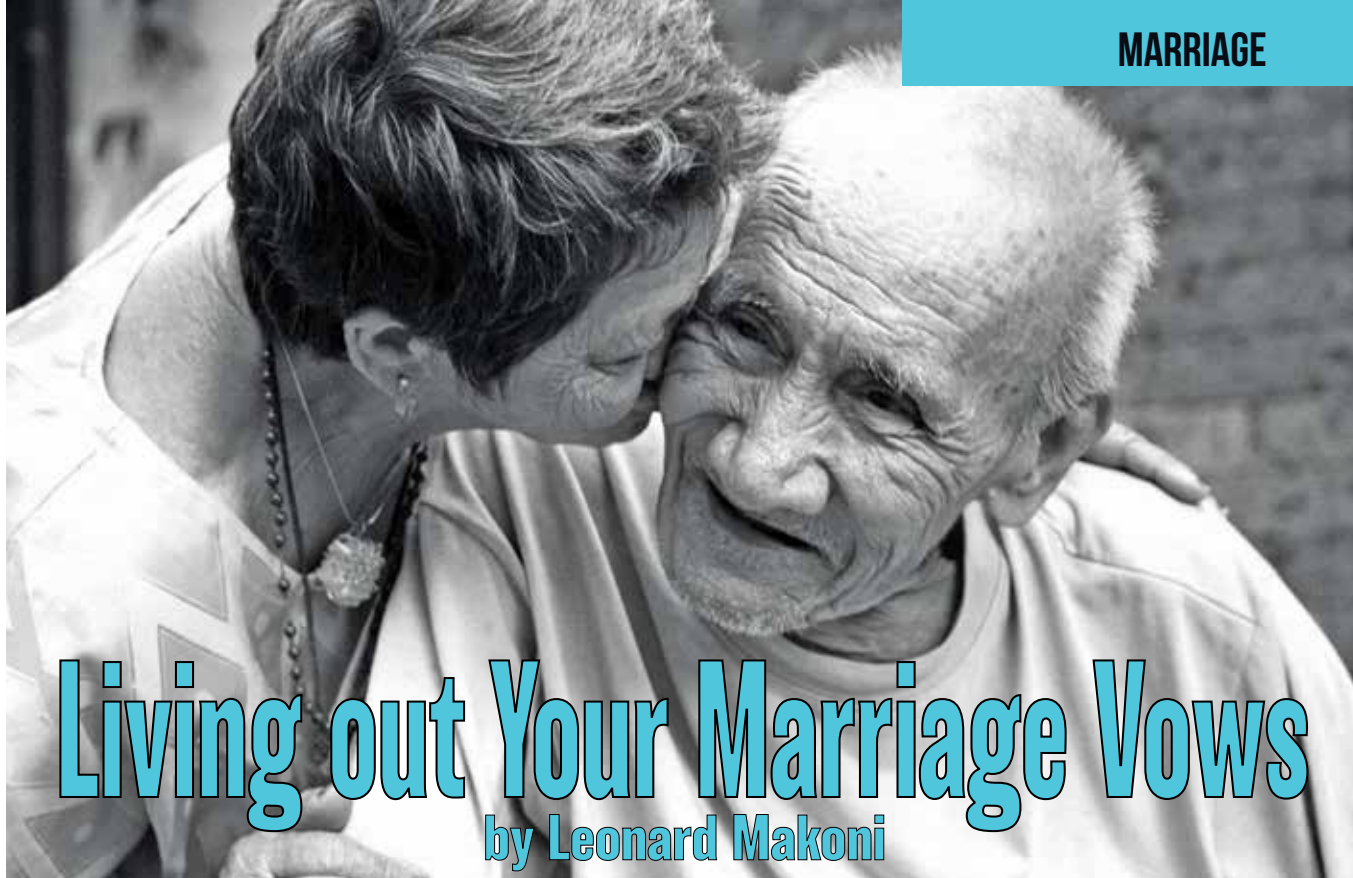
we are not being weak or defeatist or lacking in ambition by being content. No, we can (and must) be content in whatever state we are in, for the simple reason that often God will not allow us to move out of that particular state until we have become content in it.

What Paul was saying is that our happiness does not depend on our circumstances; it is dependent on Christ in our 'stances'. The secret of contentment is found in the fact that, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). If we realise that Christ is with us in whatever state, why do we need to move out of it? When we realise that Christ will strengthen us, not remove us from it or relieve us of it, then what is the problem? Paul demonstrated his conviction of this when he declared in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." - whatever!

So we need to learn to say "Whatever!" That one word means we are learning to see the state in its true perspective. We can see it as an opportunity to learn something new, to trust God, to grow and to live. We can enjoy the opportunity to experience and overcome new and different emotions. Each state that we face is a 'Christ-stance' not a circumstance, where we can show that our faith is not dependent upon, nor is it shaken by, what happens.

There will be states in which we will prefer to reside, for sure, be they geographical or metaphorical, but we are called to live each day with contentment in whatever state we live - we are invited to do so, by Christ Himself! All the states will unite to make us a better person as each one will bring us back to our God so we can say, "Whatever!"
Enough said? Whatever.

Tim Middleton is the CEO of The Association of Trust Schools (ATS).



Living out Your Marriage Vows

by Leonard Makoni

“Marriage does not have an opt-in or opt-out button depending on how good or bad things are. If you want a thriving relationship, you have to train yourself to say ‘I still do’ even when you feel like you don’t” Anon

Phineas Dube was a Zimbabwean Christian leader with international influence. His work which started in Rusitu saw him used of God in children and youth ministry in Scripture Union and World Vision. He was a talented communicator who taught Biblical truths in fun and memorable ways to adult and child alike with passion. He worked with Haggai Institute, in Maui, Hawaii and Singapore, to equip hundreds of Christian leaders in life-style evangelism from 1987 to 2011 when he fell ill. He was a sought-after Bible teacher across denominations within Zimbabwe and in the region.

Phineas was married to Tebbie (for 49 years) and they were blessed with two biological sons and three grandchildren at the time of his death on January 1st 2017. Through their work with young people they have many sons and daughters and grandchildren because of their hospitality, mentorship and counsel to many young couples.

Phineas Dube was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and struggled with the condition for six years. Tebbie was one of the few names he remembered for the longest time. She had become his pillar and whenever she was not there, he would feel insecure. His condition demanded 24-hour attention and throughout the last six years of his life,

Mama Dube was faithfully and cheerfully on his side. While he had lost all memory but his name (Baba Dube) and could utter no word, Tebbie had a language she used to keep his smile going all the way to the grave.

December is typically busy with weddings and wedding parties. In our church three couples made public vows to be committed to live with each other ‘till death do us part’. Tears flow in my heart every time I hear young people make vows. On January 1st this year my heart was full of tears having observed what it could mean to live out vows.

The life of Phineas Dube in the past six years was a challenge that very few spouses could live through. Mama Dube was given the grace and love abundant enough to love in ‘sickness till death did them part’. He was a husband who then could not pronounce her name, if at all it was in his memory, a husband who could not say thank you for her care and commitment; a husband who required physical attention 24/7 with great emotional toll. The task was not light but she took it as an ‘honour to care for God’s vessel!’ As we continue to glean through the life of Phineas, let us remember the testimony of God’s grace and faithfulness to Tebbie. She is to be saluted, commended, consulted and appreciated for showing us what it means to love through thick and thin.

Let us thank and praise God for such a life lesson on keeping marriage vows. For you


and I who are married, we need to reflect on how we are doing in keeping our promises. When spouse has a cold, what do you do? When a spouse is pregnant, how well do you keep your vows? When spouse has a broken limb, how well do you care for them? When a spouse is emotionally broken, how patient are you? If there is any encouragement in what Phineas taught about marriage, let us learn from Mama Dube, to submit to Christ and love unconditionally in obedience to God. Be strengthened in Christ as you face various trials and challenges, God will enable you.

Mama Dube, thank you for the practical lesson on what unconditional love to the end of marriage means.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1: 2-4)

“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household.” (Galatians 6: 7-10)

Leonard is a counsellor at The Christian Counselling Centre.



Removing Weeds That Choke Marriages

by Richard Langworthy

We live in times where family relationships are under immense pressure. Yet the success or failure of future generations is being shaped in our homes daily.

Building strong families begins with building strong marriages.

The weeds that choke our marriage relationships

Jesus tells a parable in which a farmer went out sowing seed. The farmer hoped for a bumper harvest but not all the seed fell on good ground. Some seed fell amongst thorns which sprung up and choked the seeds before they could flourish. (Matthew 13:1-9) In the parable, Jesus compares the thorns to the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, which choke the seed which is the Word of God. We can allow the cares and/or riches of the world to choke the Word of God, causing us to be unfruitful. These issues can be likened to weeds that begin to completely dominate our lives so that we lose sight of the life we should be living as Christians. Issues that may be choking our marriages may include the following, money, in-laws, screen time and communication.

Money and Career

Money is often a divisive issue between a couple. It can be used as a tool to manipulate and control or it can be used to help encourage a transparent, united relationship.

Often couples treat their salaries as their

own. What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours. Each spouse takes responsibility for certain household expenses from their salary. The husband pays the rent, insurance and the school fees and the wife pays for groceries, the debt repayment and the maid. Whatever is left then belongs to the husband or to the wife, being theirs to do as they please. Using his spare cash, the husband decides to start going to the gym and the wife has money to buy new clothes. This works for a while but then as the price of food increases the wife is unable to buy new clothes but the husband is still going to gym. The wife starts to feel that her husband is not taking his responsibility and doesn't care.

What if the husband is the wage earner? He feels he can spend it as he wishes and has no obligation to tell his wife how much he earns or how he spends it. He's the man and she can be grateful for what he gives her! Perhaps the wife has the better job? She comes home, puts the husband in his place because she earns the money. Money can give a sense of power, control and ownership and can easily cause division.

Each spouse needs to come to an understanding that it's not 'my money'; but

'our money'; whoever earns it, and be open and clear about how much their income is. Then the couple decide together how our money can be used to the best advantage of our family. Put both salaries on the table and decide together how to spend it. This helps bring accountability and transparency in finances.

Mothers-in-Law

Often a wife feels under pressure to impress her mother-in-law in order to show she can care for her husband and family in a way that her husband's mother approves. The new wife can be like the new servant in the house having to serve the family with the mother-in-law having the final say.

Soon the mother-in-law becomes a voice of authority in the home - not only over the wife but also above the husband. She will soon tell the young wife how to cook and how to raise the children. The Bible tells a man to leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. (Genesis 2:24) Mothers-in-law are to be respected and certainly have a place in the family but they do not have authority over their sons and their wives. A husband and his wife must always work together to keep the relationship with the mother-in-law from dividing the couple. In-laws are there to

support the marriage, not to control it.

Screen Time

Screen time needs to be managed. It can help us unwind at the end of a tough day but it can easily skew our priorities as the favourite (often immoral) soap opera becomes the centre of the evening meal or a whatsapp forum becomes more important than talking to our children and the news becomes more important than finding out how our wife's day went. Don't disturb Dad, he's watching soccer or he's on his phone again! Leave Mom alone she's absorbed in her soapie! Family communication dies at the expense of our selfishness.

How many hours do we spend absorbed by a screen compared to building family relationships? Try turning off the screens and fill that time listening to each other again.

The Silent Divorce

A silent divorce is when the couple live in the same house but have stopped communicating properly and have drifted apart. There are issues that can't be talked about and thus remain unresolved. In a silent divorce we have a piece of paper that tells us we are married but in reality there is no relationship.

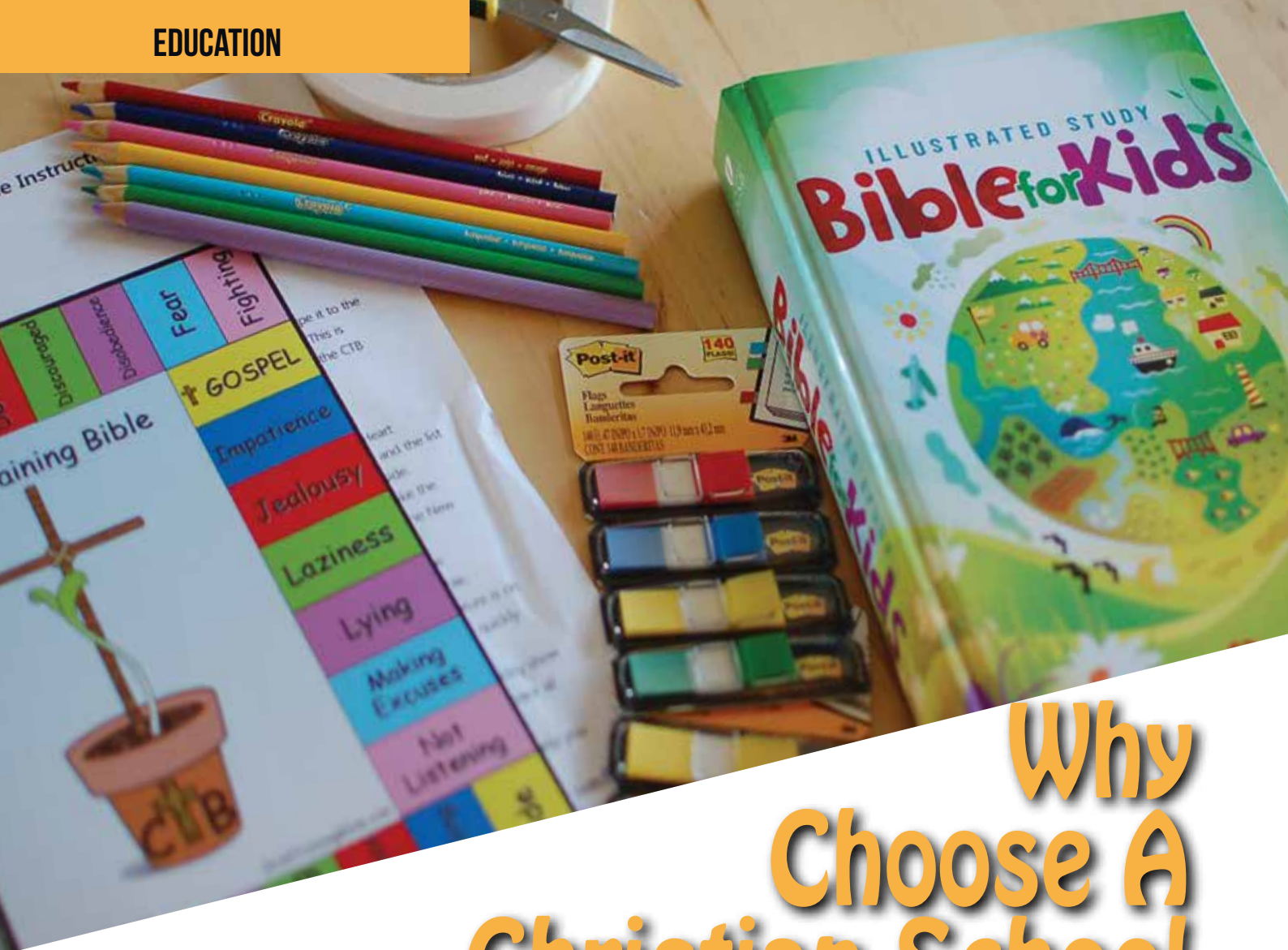
In our busy and pressured lives, it's so easy to drift apart.

Drifting apart happens subtly. Often men think that they are doing very well in their marriages but their wives feel differently. Communication is critical. It's of great advantage to a couple to set aside time each day to talk about the day – keeping no secrets. If you have drifted apart it can be uncomfortably silent to start with but you need to persevere until you find each other's hearts again. Try setting aside time each day where you can talk about every little detail of your life with your spouse.

Our Hope

We need to identify and deal with the weeds that are choking our marriages? Finding where to start can be difficult but there is always hope for those who are ready to let God build their lives. His grace is available to all who are ready to trust Him enough to surrender all to Him, including our marriages. He will begin a process of restoration. He is more than able!

Richard has been married to Ingrid for forty years, has four children and 3 grandchildren. He pastors Selbourne Christian Church in Bulawayo.



Why Choose A Christian School – A Parent’s Perspective

by Samara Ellis

The discussion about the relative merits of bringing our children up in a country like Zimbabwe, with the advantages of space, a healthier outdoor lifestyle, arguably more protected environment and most importantly a framework of morals and discipline is one that is familiar to most of us - for some it even justifies our continuing to live here despite the challenges.

Other countries (particularly First World countries) despite their obvious advantages also have their challenges and when weighing up the impact of environmental influences on our children, we often find the decision to remain here for their sake is a worthwhile one. The decision to choose a Christian school for the education of our children was made with the same criteria.

Proverbs 22:6 exhorts us to, “train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” When one considers the percentage of time children spend at school during the term, it is clear that they will be exposed to the influence of others considerably and at an age when they are easily influenced and absorb so much of what they are taught - (often

unquestioningly at primary school), or when they are trying to forge their own identity as teenagers, looking for role models to follow. That is not to say that they will ignore our influence or that their characters as ‘trained up’ by us as parents will be necessarily spoilt, but attending a Christian school has the advantage of reinforcing what we have built into them as opposed to challenging (mostly subconsciously) the foundations and values we are working to establish at home.

I would describe a Christian school as one which aims to put Christ at the centre of its education. This cannot be said of all schools who claim to be Christian. If as Christians we believe that “All things were created through Him and for Him” and that, “He is

before all things and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17), it should be conceivable that every subject at school could have the opportunity for revealing this to some extent and pointing to our Creator. Teachers play a critical role at any school, and I feel even more so at a Christian school, where their personal relationship with Christ has the potential to impact greatly on their pupils, and they have the freedom to do so. Christian education presents the syllabus or information critical to academic advancement in the context of moral values.

As parents we have been amazed at how often what we have been teaching our children in the home, or what they have been learning at Sunday School, dovetails so wonderfully with what they hear at the Christian school they attend. When the same moral values are reinforced, often with the same Scriptures but from a completely different person and perspective, the impact of learning these truths is so much greater. Every time we attend a function at the school it is brought home to us how privileged we are to have the freedom not just of religion (as that can be so diluted) but of a learning environment where following Christ is the norm. Assemblies, school plays, class devotional times all reinforce this, and I personally have been encouraged at a time when circumstances were overwhelming me and one of our sons played a Michael W. Smith song that his teacher had played for her class, saying, "Mum, listen to this song, you will like it." Our children have a lack of self-consciousness about praying aloud and in public which I never had, despite growing up in a Christian home myself. Albert Einstein said, "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one learned in school" and it is exactly that development of character along Godly lines which I feel will do more to prepare our children for life and to be valuable citizens in whatever society they choose to live in, than an academic-focused education could do. Martin Luther King Jnr said the same thing when he said that "Intelligence plus character is the goal of true education." I have found the development of character to be central to education in the school our children attend.

It is a great challenge to live up to being a 'Christian school' and just as there is no 'perfect church', I do not believe there is a perfect school, Christian or otherwise. Where Christ is your

standard one is bound to fall short. What is critical is that one tries to be Christ-like, has expectations of that and seeks to model it and encourage it in the pupils. The role of the teacher as a discipler as well as an educator (in the most basic sense of teaching information), is a privileged position, although every good teacher in any environment will seek to be an influencer as well as a conveyor of facts. When the person influencing our child has the same beliefs and values as us, our children stand a better chance of being able to flourish. The flip side of the coin is that the potential for disenchantment and disillusionment when there is failure can impact on the pupil's perception of what Christianity is. The argument we are often confronted with is that a child's environment is possibly too sheltered in a Christian school and they do not learn to make a stand for themselves, so that once they leave they may be overwhelmed by 'life out there'.

Our children are still at school and so we have not been able to test the theory, but we certainly have not found that our children are over-protected. Although the teachers are Christians, many of the pupils are not and children are exposed via their peers to much of what they will encounter 'out there'. The difference is the attitude of the authority figures in how to deal with these things and the advice offered about topics of concern. As a Christian parent there is great security in knowing that the attitude and approach of the school will be similar to our own as we have the same values and belief. That, for us as parents, has been enough to keep our children enrolled even when we consider the things that niggle us. All parents want the best for their children and want to see them nurtured and flourishing.

This is our God given responsibility and whilst the school does play a role in helping us fulfil this parental responsibility the question must remain at the forefront of our minds, "What are the primary areas we want our children to be nurtured in and flourish in, and are we giving them the best opportunity for that to happen?"

Samara is married to Andrew and they have three children. She is currently co-director of Zambesi Holidays ministering to teenagers through camps and school missions.





Sunday Services 9.15 a.m.
Borrowdale Scout Hall (opp. Borrowdale Post Office), Harare
Baby and Child friendly facilities.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GOOD SUNDAY SCHOOL

Surveys done throughout the world show that over 80% of people who make a decision to become Christians do so between the ages of 4 and 14. Research shows that people who commit to Christ early, stay committed. It is in these years that people develop their frames of reference for the rest of their lives.

Therefore a question I hope parents will ask is, "How do I know that I am doing the best for my child to ensure that they will live by God's Word?" From this flow the many discussions and opinions about what is 'best'? In the second part of our series we will consider seven key factors to look for in a good Sunday School.

1. BIBLE-BASED

Right from baby crèche it is possible and important to be teaching Biblical truths to our children in an age appropriate way. The early years are vital for building upon later, so we need to ensure we help plant secure foundations for our children when they are still very young. Just the fact that your baby or young child feels safe and secure and warmly welcomed at church reflects to them God's love for them. As the children grow older we want to see them bringing their Bibles, learning to read God's Word together and then by the end of primary school they should be able to read God's Word for themselves, be encouraged to ask difficult questions and strive to seek understanding. This follows the characteristics of how children learn and think and their development from literal thinkers to more abstract thinkers.

2. TEACHERS, PASSIONATE ABOUT GODS WORD, HUMBLE IN PRAYER AND INTENTIONAL ABOUT USING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH ITS TRUTHS

God tells us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. I get excited when I see a Sunday school teacher being creative to ensure that the child learns God's Word holistically – doing whatever it takes ... games, acting out, service and caring, crafts, eating ice cream, sweets for prizes – and seeking to help the child love and understand God's Word, value it highly and desire to obey it for God's glory.

"Exposure to spiritual truth is not enough any more than exposure to flour makes one into a loaf of bread," it has been said. Any exposure to spiritual truth that is not backed up by a living faith may end up having a negative effect because it is so easy to reject as mere formality! The lessons from Scripture need to have a practical application so that we are challenged to live life with God's help for His glory, understanding that God gives us His Holy Spirit to help us live, and so through prayer, we acknowledge our own weakness, our need for a Saviour and His grace and strength to live and face each situation.

3. TEACHERS BEING FED AND LEARNING TOO

I want to see the teacher living out their Christian faith and excited to be learning about God and how to apply His principles into their lives. All good teachers know that when we stop learning we stop teaching! The teachers do not need to know everything – but I want to see growth and hunger from the teacher, because I know that will help my child follow suit and eagerly desire to know more of God and His Word. Older teenagers are often Sunday school teachers and I encourage this, as it strengthens their faith and gives a role model for the children to follow and relate to – but they must be trained and willing to learn both in their own Christian walk as well as how to teach God's Word effectively to children.

4. RELATIONSHIPS

Every child loves to hear their name being called and knowing that they have been noticed. God knows them by name and this is

related to them through people knowing them too. Are the people who are teaching my child taking time to remember my child's name? Is the teacher interested in getting to know me as the parent too? This is really important as the prime responsibility lies in the parent's hands, so the teacher must work through the parent in all communications.

5. WHAT IS THE CURRICULUM?

Are they just having fun or is there a lesson in the fun? We have so little time set aside to formally teach our children the Word that there needs to be an urgency to use the time to the best of our ability. Teaching God's Word can be fun and young children learn through play, but it MUST be intentional. The Bible is a library of 66 books – we need to teach the doctrine of God that is learnt in ALL parts of the Bible, not just the easy, comfortable truths!

6. CLEAN, SAFE AND HAVING A ROUTINE

The routine provides security both for the child and the parent to be able to relax and be free to learn. Research shows that children who feel safe and secure will learn more easily as they will not be spending energy on trying to understand their surroundings. So routine provides this security, but should not and certainly does not need to be boring!

7. WORKING OUT ACTS 2

It is important for our children to know what being the church means – learning to honour Sunday as God's day, learning to worship God in spirit and in truth, being encouraged to meet regularly and share together in community and learn to serve and live out God's Word.

Church is God's idea and God's plan for working through His people. The Church is the bride of Christ. When we gather together, it is to bring glory to God in and through ALL we do. The children's part of the church is still church; it is not just child's play. A child's faith is simple but it is REAL! No matter the style, or length of service, it is to be a place where the presence of Christ is felt, which builds us up, teaches God's Truth and glorifies God in and through all things.

Sarah is married to Pastor Gary Cross of Northside Community Church and together are raising four daughters who love the Lord. Sarah was part of a team that edited and wrote 36 SALT books, a Sunday School SU resource material.

THE
CHILDREN'S PART
OF THE CHURCH IS
STILL CHURCH; IT IS
NOT JUST CHILD'S
PLAY



Logical Consequences

By Laura Albertyn

As a parent of four young children, I have found that logical consequences to actions can reap great rewards without losing that connection with your child's heart

As a parent of four young children, I have found that logical consequences to actions can reap great rewards without losing the connection with our child's heart. At the same time, it can burn on their little minds that bad choices have natural consequences and sets them up for life. We love using consequences in our house. They are often painful to administer as logical consequences can be tough on a kid and hard for a parent to watch, but the long-term rewards are worth the initial pain.

For example, one situation I struggle with is when my kids leave their lunchbox on the counter and I know that they will go without food that day. Everything in me wants to rush to the school and take it to them! But what I've seen is that when logical consequences are allowed to play out, a deep learning happens that no ranting, raving or rescuing could accomplish. And you know - my kids very rarely forget to pack their lunchbox now and when they do, they own the situation and find a solution themselves.

I've thought of a few scenarios down that you may be faced with in regard to discipline issues and come up with logical consequences for them. So, in a situation where the children make a mess on the floor during bath time, let them clean it up themselves. There should be no need to rant and rave but let the natural consequence play out.

- My son was terrible at weeing on the floor when he went to the toilet. It drove me mad and it didn't matter how many times I ranted about how much I hated cleaning the toilet and floor, he continued doing it – until I got him to clean the floor and toilet, using the cleaning equipment and bleach. He soon saw why I hated the job. Now, on the rare occasions that he makes a mess, he quietly gets on with cleaning it himself. Logical consequences teach our children from an early age to begin to take responsibility for their actions and to learn how to clean up their mess (emotional and physical).
- Often when I'm on the spot and can't come up with an appropriate consequence, or I'm feeling so angry I could blow, I have learnt that delaying the consequence until I have thought of an appropriate one or calmed down is the best way forward.
- Kids need to process the situation too and you can ask them what they think would be a good consequence for their action, helping them if they cannot think of a good one. Keep calm and assure them of your unconditional love, even if you are disappointed in their behaviour. This, together with reassurance of your belief that they can resolve the situation, has proved invaluable in my experience.
- If we learn to control our response to our children and keep the love connection, it provides a great foundation for them to be

able to be real with us about their failures. We have had some beautiful learning experiences as a family through this and found, incredibly, that our heart connection has remained strong. Sadly, I still rant and rave on occasions and am reminded in those instances how ineffectual it can be. It creates an environment of fear and breaks that vital heart connection.

Often when a consequence is given – using pocket money to pay for something, losing screen time, having to do a chore for mum, cleaning up their mess, the child has a total melt down. This is ok! Consequences are hard, don't be put off by their reaction. Experiencing a little pain for huge life lessons that will carry them into the future is so worth it.

Fun to be With or Room!

We use this method often, asking our children to please go to their bedroom until they are fun to be with again and ready to join the family. Once they have sorted their attitude out, they are welcomed back. Empathise with them and acknowledge that the consequence is really hard to accept, but you love them and they will have to change their behaviour. This works brilliantly with toddlers who whinge too. In the early stages, you might have to physically take them to the bathroom or bedroom, but they will catch on quick. Our kids have learnt that it is their choice now whether they will be part of the family or not.

Energy Drain

We also love the method of Energy Drain in our house. I will say something like, "Oh my goodness guys, this arguing is a real energy drain on mum, how are you going to put my energy back?" They can then make a few suggestions and we will proceed from there. Now I just have to say, "I feel an energy drain coming on," and it all stops!

For the older kids who are fighting I will often say, "Do you need me to come and referee – I charge 50c for 5min - to help you sort this out?" This works a charm and they learn to take responsibility for their actions, work things out together in a loving way and have the security of knowing that I am there when they do need help to resolve their problem.

What are the benefits of logical consequences for your children? Well, they have a safe place to learn valuable life lessons. If you learn to control your response to them and keep the love connection, they will establish a great foundation for life. Allow the consequences of poor decisions to be their master teacher. Your children will learn to understand the consequences of their decisions and, when presented with a choice again, they will make a great choice.

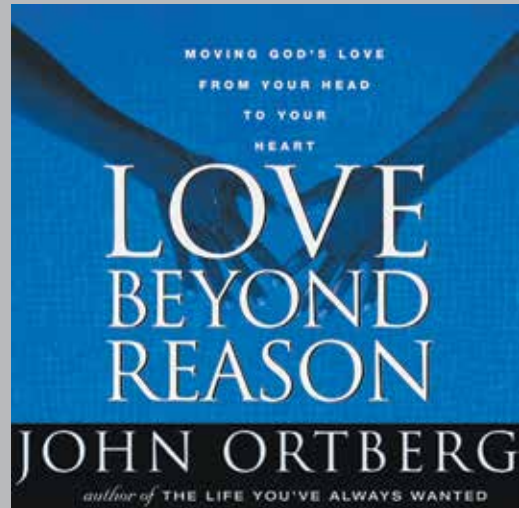
Another advantage is that we are helping our children gain valuable tools for the teenage years when peer pressure is a real issue. They will be able to make good choices as they know there are logical consequences that will play out in any decision they make. Our kids learn through the application of logical consequences that their sin will catch them and that they can grow in wisdom with each mistake they make.

As parents, we partner with the Holy Spirit as we walk through this road of parenting and we need to learn to call on Him and listen to His voice, leading and guiding us. He wants to partner with us, if we will let Him.

Laura is married to Mark, mum to four wonderful kids and co-founder of Makomborero Zimbabwe.

LOVE BEYOND REASON

By John Ortberg



In *Love Beyond Reason*, John Ortberg reveals God as the Father who loves us passionately and who is committed to our highest joy and our greatest good. He explores the life changing ways His love has expressed itself through Jesus.

Ortberg shows clearly how this love is not based on our attributes but rather on His unconditional acceptance and regard of us. "We are all of us rag dolls, flawed and wounded, broken and bent...but we are God's rag dolls. He knows about our raggedness and He loves us anyhow."

Ortberg shows how, in His love for us, God our Father pays us attention. He reaches out to us, touches the untouchable (accepts those whom others reject), He is, by His grace, the Lord of the second chance. He explores what it means to be chosen, even though a rag doll.

A chapter which I found particularly helpful and relevant to us in Zimbabwe is the chapter 'Safe in God's love.' Ortberg quotes Dallas Willard who says, "Jesus brings assurance that our universe is a perfectly safe place for us to be." This even in the midst of trouble, in the storm and in the lions' den. Even the valley of the shadow of death is a safe place!

And as we are brought face to face with this love that sets us free, so it empowers us to love others in the same way. Ortberg shows how we, like Jesus, can love our spouse, our family, our friends and the world around us with the same practical, transforming love.

I'm sure you will be enormously encouraged, as I was, through this book. I want to know and experience more of this 'rag doll' love that casts out fear. Don't you?

Book review by Ian Wilsher

FINDING CONTENTMENT AFTER SEXUAL ABUSE

BY HOPOLANG PHORORO

After several years of remaining silent, I finally plucked up the courage to share my story of abuse with someone close. The person was horrified! She couldn't believe it and asked, "How, after so many years, did you manage to hide it?" There was an awkward silence as she tried to digest the news and I saw the emotions that she was battling with - disbelief, anger, pain, guilt, sadness and hatred. But I felt relieved. At long last, I'd managed to remove the load that had burdened me for so many years. I thought that maybe now I could find true contentment. However, having shared the story with my loved one, what happened next? All she could do was express her admiration and applaud me for being brave and courageous enough to speak about my experience of abuse and let me know that I could count on her unwavering support on the journey towards healing.

As the days passed, the contentment that I longed for seemed like an illusion and instead, I realised that sharing my experience was just the tip of the iceberg. Not that talking about it didn't help but I still seemed 'stuck' in one place. The choices that I made, the decisions not made and my relationships told a story and it certainly wasn't one of overcoming. It was not a good place and I asked myself, "What's happening?"

Allow me to explain what happened... The journey towards healing was just starting. Recovery was possible and necessary but it was a long road to get there. Discussing sexual abuse is not an easy topic, given the private nature of the problem, the shame in admitting it and the sheer nature of both reported and unreported cases. In my journey of healing from a past of childhood sexual abuse, I didn't have the benefit of counselling. However, I strongly encourage counselling as it offers a safe

you are trying to hold under water. In time, you will have to work harder and harder to not let the memories of the childhood trauma emerge."

The sooner you address the trauma, the sooner you can enjoy contentment. This comes with the acceptance that mistakes will be made as you learn to cope with the abuse and come to terms with the fact that the abuse happened, that it shaped you and that you did not cause the abuse to happen.

THE
SOONER YOU
ADDRESS THE TRAUMA,
THE SOONER YOU
CAN ENJOY
CONTENTMENT

space to process the trauma. Left unattended, the trauma will impact all aspects of life, including marriage, parenting and even our relationship with God.

Dr. Jill Slattery, a clinical psychologist says, "Painful experiences act like a beach ball

In the absence of any counselling, I continued to live with wounds. I noted a pattern and kept asking myself why I would keep pursuing relationships that reinforced the trauma and confirmed the lies about myself. I had no one to help me process my observations and behaviour and finally, only as I sought God, I understood where it stemmed from. Of course, I didn't know the psychological terminology and it was much later, when pursuing an Honours Degree in Psychology and reading around the topic of sexual abuse that I could put a name to the behaviour. I believed statements such as, "I am damaged goods"; "I will never find someone who will love me as I am" and, "to please a man, I have to give him sex all the time."

Even though, I did not articulate these statements out loud, they were in my mind

and eventually, they became self-fulfilling prophecies. This resulted in relationships that were always doomed to failure. For some who have been abused, promiscuity becomes the pattern. When the victim looks for attention, or works in a job that belittles them, making them feel worthless or they try to make everyone else happy at their own expense. Counsellor Valerie Kuykendall-Rogers has described this reaction as “wounded attachment,” which she says is, “The unconscious way of being attracted or attached to someone or something that reminds the survivor of or reinforces the wound/trauma, or in this case the sexual assault. At its core, it’s the way in which survivors subconsciously seek out relationships that reinforce the wounded aspect of themselves.”

Awareness of the wounded attachment helped me in my move towards resilience and healing. In order to heal, I had to learn to trust; to identify personal coping strategies; and to establish healthy behavioral patterns in place of harmful tendencies. As I learnt to value myself and manage the very painful feelings from the abuse, the wounds to heal. The patterns that had been developed in childhood to manage the abuse were deeply ingrained and it took much practice to rewrite the brain with loving thoughts towards myself. Understanding that God loved me and would always love me was a source of contentment, even with the pain that came, as I continued to process the deep roots of the abuse.

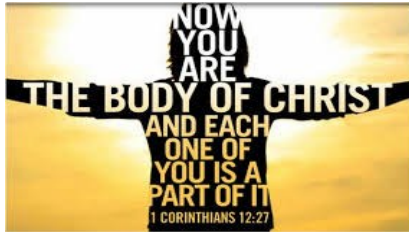
Contentment lies in knowing that you are making progress and that today, you are not where you were yesterday. Today you can look at yourself squarely in the mirror with a steady gaze and say, “I am beautiful, unique, valuable and precious!” Next week, you can say the same thing with a smile and actually believe it.

Contentment is to be at peace and know, “I am right where God wants me to be,” It’s an attitude of the heart, a daily position of praise and gratitude through the journey of recovery from sexual abuse. Many survivors, have not shared their experience of abuse with anyone, let alone processed what happened and are caught up in miserable and failed relationships, struggling with wounded attachments. My advice is, “Don’t walk the journey towards restoration on your own, find a counsellor or a trusted person, who can walk with you.”

Hopolang is passionate about mentoring/coaching young women. She runs a ministry called Daughters of Destiny.




Highlands
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30AM EARLY SERVICE
9:00AM FAMILY SERVICE
JUNIOR CHURCH AND TINY TOTS [DURING SCHOOL TERM]
2:00PM SHONA SERVICE
5:00PM FAMILY LIFE SERVICE


Breakfast after morning services and a light supper at the 5pm



OFFICE DETAILS
FRONT OFFICE: TERRY ELLIOT
MONDAYS & FRIDAYS 8:00AM -1:00PM
TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, THURSDAYS 8:00AM -2:30PM
TEL: 495154/481810


EMAIL: Highpres@zoi.co.zw
FACEBOOK: Highlands Presbyterian Church – Harare
WEBSITE: www.Highlandspresby.com
TWITTER: @HighlandsPresby

BLAST: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS –FRIDAYS 6:30PM -9:00PM



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SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES

FIRST SERVICE: 7:00AM
SECOND SERVICE: 9:15AM
THIRD SERVICE: 11:30AM

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T: +263 4 700020-2 | +263 8677 004899
E: admin@jabulanlcc.org | W: www.jabulanlcc.org

Christians don't get angry



They just get a little cross

The Centre News

Training Centre

We are so grateful for the good rains we have had in Harare this season. However, they have put a damper on the progress of the building of the Training Centre. The thatching must take place in dry weather as wet thatch can lead to rotting. So, it was decided to put the building on hold until we can have a guaranteed two-week dry patch. We had planned a few events with the completed building in mind. So sadly, we had to cancel the planned Valentine Dinner and the Loving Marriage book-launch that was to take place on the same evening. We have had to limit numbers on other events like Ladies' Breakfast, the School Counsellor Course and Basic Counselling Course because of the persistent rains and not having a roof on the Training Centre. However, all of this highlights the big need we have for the Training Centre. We will appreciate it even more once it is complete!



Grief Course/ Support Group

Every Wednesday a small group of people gather to deal with losses that they have suffered in their lives. The loss may be a divorce, loss of a job or someone close has died. The group is designed to help individuals work through the pain and grief of their loss. This is what Joanna (who runs the group with Margaret) had to say, "It has been such a privilege for Margaret and I to run the Grief Course/Support Group again this term. We are seeing the Lord move in people's lives right before our eyes! It's just awesome to be in His river of living waters which holds healing and hope for the wounded and crushed in spirit. Any form of loss can cause such pain and hurt but we have a Father in Heaven who understands and who can't wait to bring us comfort if we allow Him."



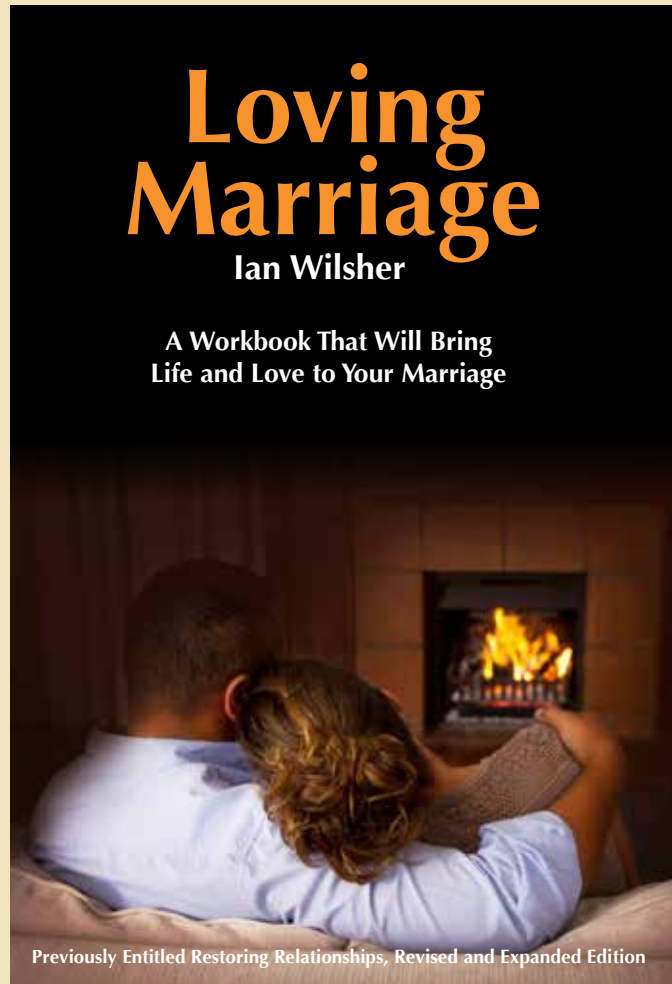
Valentine's Marriage Seminars

Valentine's Day offers an opportunity for couples to renew the romance in their relationship. The Counselling Centre held two Marriage Seminars on the Saturday prior to the day itself. The first looked at God's design for Marriage - Intimacy and the second looked at The Love/Respect cycle. These are two of the new topics in Ian's book, *Loving Marriage*. Intimacy, love and respect are all vital parts of a good marriage and fundamental needs we all have. These seminars are designed to help individuals within a marriage brush up on what they personally can do to be the agents to bring these aspects into the relationship. Romance is often the fruit of investing in a marriage. It sounds like an advertising jingle but it is absolutely true to say, "Attending these events makes good marriages better."



Loving Marriage

Ian Wilsher has revised and expanded his book *Restoring Relationships*. It has been renamed *Loving Marriage*. The Centre has sold over a thousand copies of the old version (*Restoring Relationships*). It is a work-book that enables couples to examine their marriage relationship and improve and grow in those areas that need attention. Ian says "every marriage can improve." Like a canoe going up stream, if you stop rowing, you'll drift back down stream. Look out for the new improved book - *Loving Marriage*.

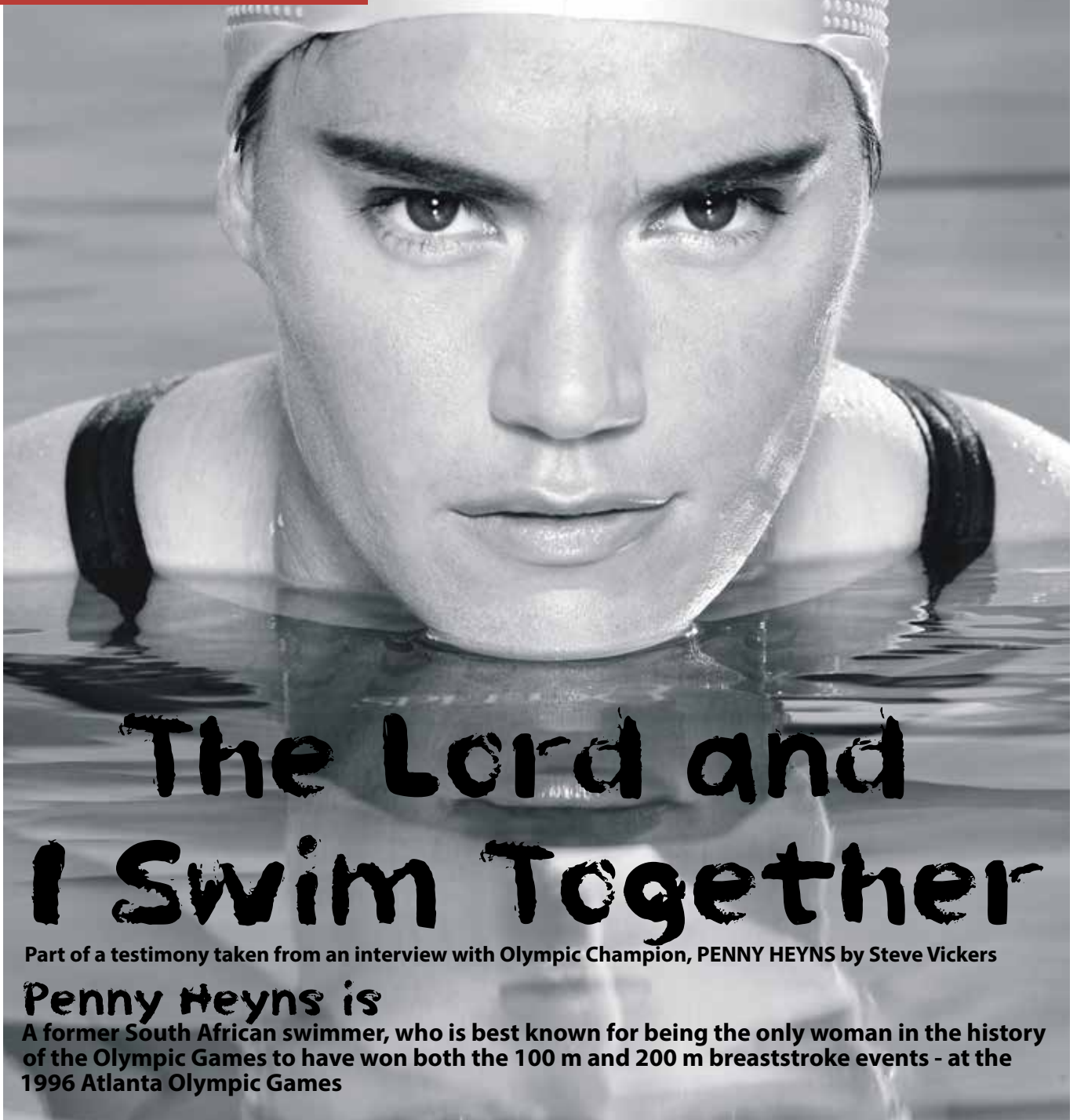


Ladies' Breakfast

At the recent Ladies' Breakfast, Naz Rugnathji gave her testimony of how she became a Christian. What an encouragement to hear how God, in His love, has moved in this family. Naz described the fear that ruled her life growing up. Her mother came to know Jesus as a result of attending courses at the Counselling Centre and long story short, Naz went to work in China, where she met with Jesus herself. Her husband Prashant, has since become a Christian. (Naz's testimony will be included in the next issue of *The Centre*).

God our Father is at work! That's our confidence, that God, in His grace and by His Spirit is at work in the lives of people. In this ministry, He gets their attention through their problems. It is such a privilege to see the Lord at work in the lives of those who come to the Centre, not only to help them through their problem but more significantly, to give them that hope that comes from believing in Jesus and all He has done for us.





The Lord and I Swim Together

Part of a testimony taken from an interview with Olympic Champion, PENNY HEYNS by Steve Vickers

Penny Heyns is

A former South African swimmer, who is best known for being the only woman in the history of the Olympic Games to have won both the 100 m and 200 m breaststroke events - at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games

- Regarded as one of the greatest breaststroke swimmers.
 - Three time Olympian
 - 2 Olympic Gold medals, 1 Olympic Bronze medal
 - 3 World Championships Silver Medals.
 - 6 All Africa Games Gold Medals (including 3 at the 1996 Games Held In Zimbabwe)
 - Held world records on several occasions during her career. She is the only female swimmer in history to hold five of the possible six breaststroke world records at the same time.
 - She is the only breastroker, male or female, to hold world records in all 3 possible distances namely 50m, 100m and 200m.

"As an athlete, your identity becomes locked in your achievement. And I didn't realise I was doing that. I got caught up in achieving. Once you achieve whatever you are aspiring to, whether it be sport, financial, whatever it is that you have been chasing, when you reach that goal, you find that it is empty. It was like that for me a year after Atlanta. At that time, I found myself at a Christian concert. I recommitted my life to the Lord. I realised that there were areas of my life that I hadn't let God into. And it was the time to surrender everything. My spiritual life grew and as I got stronger in the Lord, my swimming got worse and worse!

Christians think that you become a Christian and everything is wonderful after that. I reached a point (this is before the Commonwealth trials in '98) where I felt I hated swimming. I would go to the pool and feel physically ill and I would get ill at the idea of getting into the water. But the Commonwealth trials and games were coming up and I had to get in. I phoned home and said to my mom, "I want to give up swimming." And, "I'm going to go into ministry because surely that's what God wants

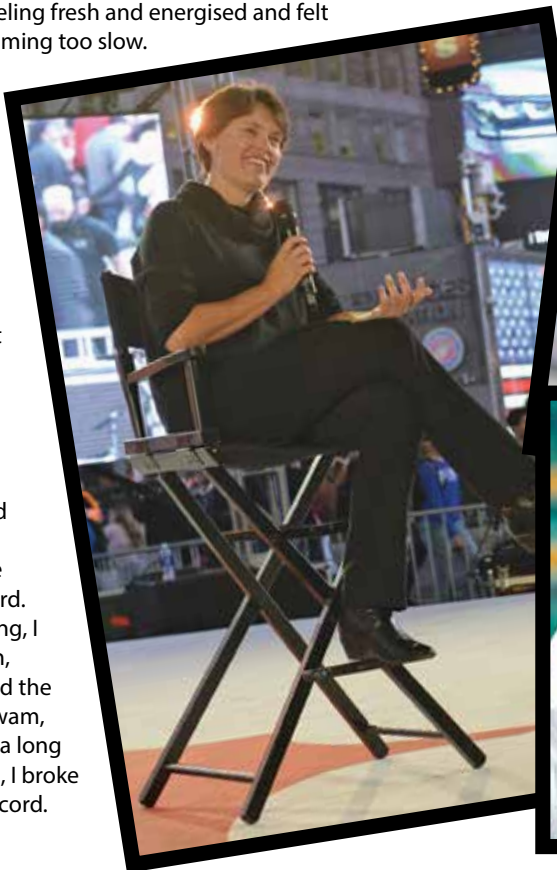
me to do." Mum told me to pray about it before I decided. So I put out a fleece because I wanted to be certain of what God's will was. I asked for three particular things to happen in the next ten days. All three things happened.

At that point in time, in two years, I hadn't swum anywhere near my world record. I still held the 100m but the 200m record was so far off the radar that I never could have imagined coming near those times again. I still felt the same way, not excited about swimming. I was trusting that if that's what God wanted of me, He would give me the desire. In my heart I was hoping it was a test. I was hoping He would tell me, "Well done" and I could go home. When I got there, (I had moved to Calgary in Canada) I was told to swim on the other side of the pool, alone, day after day, up and down. I had to do long distance swimming, lap after lap, which I hated. I was crying in my goggles, very unhappy.

After sometime, I remember going home and having a quiet time. I flipped open the Bible to Colossians 3:23. It said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." That was such a revelation for my swimming because I realised that if I was going to swim with all my heart it had to be moment by moment. And for me the best way to do that was to worship and pray in the Spirit. So I went back to the pool and did my long distance swimming day by day. And what had been a terrible thing, suddenly became a blessing. It was a time I could fellowship with God and it became a cherished time. My swimming became a physical form of worship with my whole body. As I did that, I began to enjoy it more, and also began improving. I hadn't realised just how much I had improved. In 1999, the year before the Olympics, I was at some swim meet in Los Angeles. The first race was a 200 metre breaststroke. I remember getting up on the blocks and I was very tired. I said to the Lord "I'm going to worship you back and forth and enjoy the race."

After three lengths, I turned back to do the fourth and realised I was still feeling fresh and energised and felt I was swimming too slow.

And so I started picking up speed. As I touched the wall, I couldn't really see the time at the end of the pool. Shortly afterwards they announced that I had beaten the world record. That evening, I did it again, worshipped the Lord as I swam, and to cut a long story short, I broke my own record.

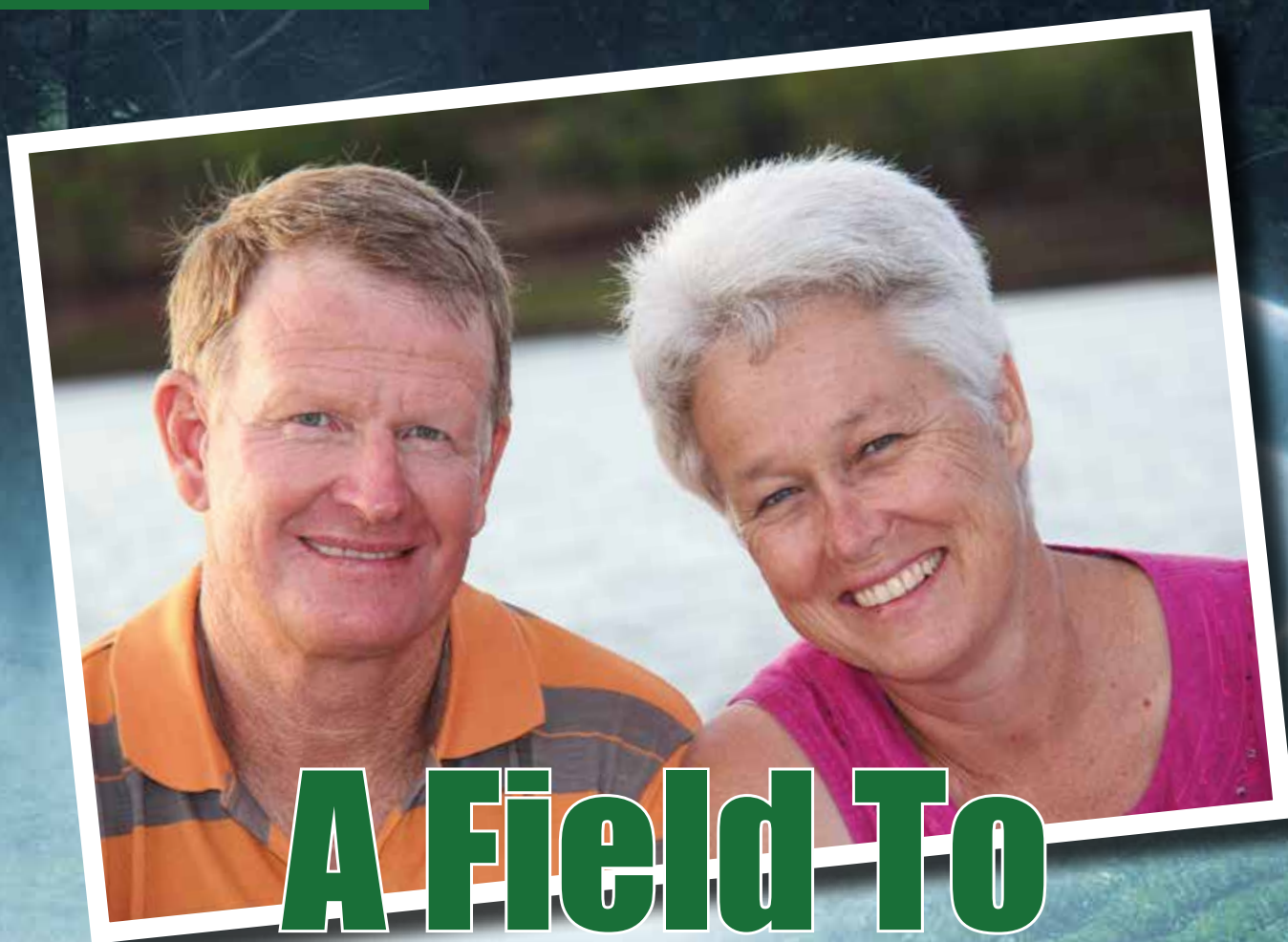


The next day was the 100m race. I managed to improve my times both in the morning and evening, that is four world records in a row.

From there onto the Pan-Pacific champs in Sydney, I had another four records in a row and then another three at home. The point I want to make is not about the world records but about the principle that you can never ever imagine what God can do through you if you worship Him with a pure heart. As I worshipped Him through my swimming, He blew my mind in terms of my performances. This is the way it evolved at the end of my career. The lonelier I was in my swimming, the closer I felt to God. And today, as I look back as a retired athlete, that's the part I miss the most. There's a kind of fellowship I enjoyed in the water that I cannot replicate in any other area. There's a solitude, a white noise when you're under the water, it was a sense of the Lord and I swimming together. I can't explain it."

Steve Vickers is a radio broadcaster and head of sport at Star FM. Steve is married to Tellmore and they have a daughter, Rufaro, aged 13.





A Field To Play On

By Bob Henson

There are a lot of negatives about rich men in the Bible. Most of those negatives do not condemn the wealth in itself, but rather the priority it creates in the hearts of man. But God does seem to have blessed many of His dear servants with immense wealth and wisdom. Examples are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah. And then there was Job.

In Job 1:3 the Bible describes him as the most illustrious man in the East because of his vast material possessions. Despite his personal conflicts, Job faithfully proved his immense loyalty to God. Whilst none of us could ever dream of enduring the trials of Job, one thing we can be assured of, as we engage in our business development, is that we will go through many trials.

My first job, after qualifying, was a huge achievement. I remember taking an evening walk around the farm with Trish, my fiancé at the time, and marvelling at God's provision. This was it! We were about to be married, had the perfect job, would work there forever. We would start our retirement plans by saving to buy our own home, hopefully paid in full by retirement.

In hindsight, I had little concept of what lay ahead; I was content with my situation and remained so for another five years. I had a challenging job as the farm manager of a research farm. I also had

the rewarding task of designing and building seed grading and processing machinery for the seed industry. (Engineering is my great passion and by age nineteen I had already patented several inventions.) But the day arrived when I realised I was no longer challenged in this position and needed to move on.

After another six years as the general manager on another very large mixed farm, we found ourselves negotiating to buy our own farm. I had never considered owning my own farm, and felt a little out of my comfort zone considering such a momentous change in our lives. We would no longer be employees with the security that this provided. After much prayer and even more trepidation, we were blessed to be able to buy a beautiful ranch in the Lowveld.

After 10 successful years of farming on our own, developing our farm from an unviable one, to a highly developed and profitable one, we were unceremoniously dispatched from our farm and ranch, care of the chaotic land reform program. We found ourselves back at the drawing board with very little resources after losing our home, our business and access to our profession. How could God have allowed this? What had we done wrong? We had, after all, prayed and fasted over and over, and truly believed we would keep our farm.

Then the opportunity to re-open a derelict coal mine presented itself. It was on the Sengwa river, just about in the middle of nowhere. It was a huge and frightening challenge, and I was reluctant to commit my few remaining resources into such a large project about which I knew so little. I was fortunate to have a positive partner to encourage me and soon found myself in the hot Lowveld sun constructing a processing plant and applying an assortment of small farm machinery to work in a mining application.

We went on to become the largest supplier of coal to industry in the country; a blessing both to us and to the country, at a time when Hwange colliery had all but collapsed. But once again, we were unlawfully dispossessed of this business and found ourselves looking to start again.

Nearly ten years have now passed, and we have had many more rollercoaster rides since then. In hindsight, however, God's hand has been clearly demonstrated in all our business achievements. We continue to face crushing disappointments, closed doors, moved goal posts and sometimes vanishing goalposts! Trish is our prayer soldier, sergeant major actually, and is regularly called upon to intercede during our difficulties. God always provides a way.

I believe God expects us to apply His God-given human and spiritual resources and wisdom to a career we can enjoy. But it does take committed hard work to get ourselves into that fulfilling position. The great thing is, this is what He wants for us, so we can achieve it! I also feel financial achievement is just one small measure of a person's achievements; there are many more noble ones.

Any story should have a moral. I am hesitant to use Joseph in this analogy as I could never be considered righteous and upright as he. He went through some awful, unbelievable, trials. But he stated later to his brothers that what they had meant as bad to him, God meant for good. I know we often look at our sad situations and think it is the end of the world; but maybe God means it for good – and in that we can find contentment. If only I remember this, the next time it happens!

As I look back on our trials; losing the farm, mining contracts etc., I realise they have all been for my good. The chaotic situation in the country has presented us huge opportunities that we could never have had in a normal boring first world country! We are now very happily settled in Harare, with our three boys and their families almost next door, and we are loving our two grandchildren.

I don't believe God has a "fixed" plan for us; I do believe He has a purpose for us. I believe He gives us health, wisdom and abilities, and then provides us with a field to play on. As we get injured, and as the goal posts get moved, He gives us the wisdom and strength to deal with the situation. He does not promise a fair referee, good team mates, or a fair-playing opposition. He also doesn't promise fair weather, or no pot-holes or plain sailing. After all, life's not fair, but as my son often says, 'It's not fair in our favour! Jesus has paid our price, and we are getting what we don't deserve, and not getting what we do deserve!' How can we complain!

Bob is married to Trish. They have three sons and two grandchildren.

Heart Dynamics



Ever wondered why you do some of the things you do?

Ever tried to change them unsuccessfully?

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Printworks



CASM

CENTRE FOR ADOLESCENT SINGLE MUMS TRUST

BY VICTORIA MAPXASHIKE

It is with a mixture of hope and joy on the one hand and anxiety and uncertainty on the other, that I report the establishment and registration of the Centre for Adolescent Single Mums Trust (CASM). This Trust was opened in response to the alarming statistics of adolescent girls aged between 10-20 years, who are dropping out of school as a result of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies in Zimbabwe.

I say "with hope and joy" because I am convinced that CASM will contribute, however modestly, towards both reducing the number of adolescent girls dropping out of school or facilitating their return to school. I also say "with anxiety and uncertainty", because of the gigantic size of this problem and the many challenges which CASM will meet along this journey.

There are many factors which contribute to the occurrence of this serious phenomenon. In the big picture are factors such as economic problems, the collapse of the family fabric, decadent social behaviour and non-conformity to Christian values. Directly, adolescent pregnancies are caused by increasing cases of incest, rape and forced early marriages all of which constitute gross abuse of girl-child rights.

Consequently, after falling victim to unwanted and unplanned pregnancy, the adolescent girl is not only forced out of school but she is often thrown out of the home by her parents. On the street, she is exposed to child prostitution, STIs, including HIV/AIDS, drugs, alcoholism, crime, violence and risky abortion practices, ultimately becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Unconfirmed statistics put the numbers of pregnant adolescent girls dropping out of school at between 2000 and 4000 annually. These figures, (which are probably conservative), translate into between 2000 and 4000 semi-literate girls who have no access to the job market because they are not sufficiently educated and qualified. They become a burden to their families, community, society and the country as a whole.

It is against this backdrop that the Centre for Adolescent Single Mums Trust (CASM) was conceived about three years ago and founded as a registered trust in 2016. CASM is run by six trustees including the founders and supported by three members of staff, as well as by persons on attachment and by volunteers.

CASM'S VISION

Empowering adolescent girls, victims of unplanned and unwanted motherhood because of incest, rape and forced early marriages, to become self-reliant.

CASM'S OBJECTIVES

- To empower adolescent single mothers to protect themselves against incest, rape and forced early marriages through information, education and communication workshops.
- To offer vocational and life skills training to adolescent single mothers.
- To raise awareness among adolescent single mothers on communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis.
- To establish income-generating projects like market gardening, poultry, and sewing for adolescent single mothers.
- To advocate for girls' rights in the community.
- To help vulnerable children of adolescent single mothers.

CORE BUSINESS OR MISSION is divided into 3 major activities:


1. Counselling adolescent single mums.
2. Facilitating their return to schools or to vocational training colleges.
3. Supporting the adolescent single mums who no longer want to return to the classroom to mount small, viable, income-generating projects.

The work of CASM will kick off in 2017 with a needs assessment pilot project to be conducted in Epworth, one of the suburbs immensely affected by this scourge. The findings of the baseline survey will then lead to the Epworth Pilot Project implementation.

It is CASM's hope that if the Epworth Pilot Project implementation succeeds, it will serve as a showcase model to be replicated elsewhere in the country including other towns, farms, rural areas and mining compounds.

The Centre for Adolescent Single Mums Trust is well aware that single-handedly, it cannot go far and succeed in this endeavour. This is why the CASM Founders are comforted to know that there are other organisations, like the Christian Counselling Centre out there, with which CASM can establish collaborative partnerships in such areas as counselling, all for the good of adolescent single mums and by extension, for the welfare of their babies and families.

Victoria Mapxashike is CASM Co-Founder and Executive Director.



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The Journey From Denial to Acceptance

by Sihle Nyashanu

The presence of disabilities or disorders within families bring about a lot of emotions especially to the parents of the child who has been affected. It is therefore very important for relatives and those from the communities to be aware of the stages that these parents go through as they try to deal with what their child is going through. A lot of questions come about as they try to make sense of the situation.

I can attest to the fact that indeed the day a parent gives birth to a child with an apparent disability their life is forever changed. Or as in my case, where the disorder is not apparent to the naked eye, the day I got the diagnosis, my life changed as I now had to deal with the meaning of it all. When we are expecting none of us ever makes preparations for a child with challenges. Yet they have to deal with this reality from the day the child is born or from the day diagnosis is given. It is my prayer that God helps us all in reaching out to affected families and not to be quick to pass judgement.

Against this background and in order for us to provide the support that is needed, I felt it important for us to discuss in detail the stages that parents/carers of those affected with

disabilities or disorders go through. There are five stages as they try to deal with the situation.

These are described as follows:

Stage 1 - Shock, Disbelief, Denial

In this stage the parent experiences shock and disbelief.

This shock is experienced and expressed in different ways. Anxiety, confusion and helplessness are some of the feelings experienced in this stage. Some might even deny that their child is said to be affected by whatever condition has been diagnosed. Also the parent might feel ashamed that they have been given a child with a disability or disorder. Some might feel guilty as they try to see if what has happened was their fault.

Stage 2 - Anger, Resentment

After the initial shock, the parent might find themselves angry with the world. Angry because of the hand that they have been dealt. If this is not handled properly and if help is not provided for the parent, the parent might be found resenting the innocent child that they have been blessed with.

THE DAY
A PARENT GIVES
BIRTH TO A CHILD WITH AN
APPARENT DISABILITY
THEIR LIFE IS FOREVER
CHANGED

Stage 3 - Bargaining

At this stage, the parent begins 'shopping around' for treatment with the hope of being told something different. This might be seeking for other medical opinions and mapping the way forward on intervention programmes that will be required. It is also worth mentioning that at this stage, the belief system that one operates in will come into play as the parent realises the condition is beyond their control.

Stage 4 - Depression and Discouragement

As the parent realises that the disability or disorder is not going anywhere, the parent may suffer from depression and discouragement as they contemplate what the future holds and the kind of lifestyle changes the family will go through in order to cater for the affected child. The parent might also withdraw and avoid any form of communication from others especially with regards to what they are facing.

It is therefore very important for us within our families and communities to offer prayers for the affected and be there to lend an ear and a shoulder to cry on in these stages.

Stage 5 - Acceptance

This is the final and MOST IMPORTANT stage as this sets the tone of how the child will be treated. It is also true that once the child is accepted as an equal member of the family, the way the extended family, church family and community treat that child will be in line with how the immediate family (parents and siblings) treat them. Once there is acceptance, the parent goes out to find all the information they can about the condition in order to help their

child live their life to the fullest. Adjustments with the family unit are also made quite easily in order to accommodate the special needs of the affected child. Parents at this stage also acknowledge the importance of taking one day at a time and celebrate the milestones of their child no matter how small.

Please note that it is not set in stone that all parents follow the stages in that order as all of us are different and we don't react to challenges in the same way. However, one thing for sure, we all will be working towards acceptance.

As I journeyed towards acceptance, I felt God reminding me through Psalms 139 that all of us including those with disabilities or disorders or those different from us are fearfully and wonderfully made and that God has precious thoughts about us. Yes, I will admit that it is not easy taking care of a child with challenges but through grace and the love of God it becomes manageable.

Sometimes I look back and just marvel at how far God has pulled us through as a family. The fact that He allowed it to happen to me tells me that He had other plans and He will take me step by step until the last. It is my prayer that after all is said and done, I am able to hold onto the lessons God would have taught me and be of help to someone else who is going through the same thing I went through.

For more information or comments please feel free to contact me on sihle.nyashanu@gmail.com.

Sihle is married to Kuda and they have been blessed with two boys. She is studying for a Bachelor degree in Special Education as she has a particular interest in disabilities.

Easter Biscuits

Ingredients:

3 cups plain flour	1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg	225g butter
1 cup castor sugar	2 eggs
3/4 cup currants	Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

Method:

1. Sift the flour and spices into a bowl. In a separate bowl, beat butter and sugar with electric beaters until thick and pale, then add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Fold in the flour mixture in 2 batches, then stir in currants and zest. Shape into a disc, enclose in plastic wrap and chill for at least 2 hours.
2. Line 2 baking trays with baking paper.
3. Divide dough into 4 portions. Roll out 1 portion to 4-5mm thick (keep remaining dough covered and chilled), then cut with a fluted 6cm round biscuit cutter and place on the trays. Repeat with remaining dough, re-rolling the trimmings to make about 40 biscuits. Chill for a further 15 minutes.
4. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
5. Sprinkle biscuits with extra sugar. Bake for 10 minutes until firm to touch but still pale.



MALARIA PREVENTION

BY DR NYASHA MURPHREE

Malaria is a serious illness that kills millions of people every year. Here in Zimbabwe most of our malaria cases are *Plasmodium Falciparum* which is the most virulent and fatal of the four types of malaria. At popular holiday destinations in Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and other neighbouring countries there are virulent forms of malaria which have different drug sensitivities from those common in Zimbabwe. This article covers very basic information on preventing Malaria infection in Zimbabwe and hopes to dispel some of the myths surrounding chemoprophylaxis for Malaria. Please consult your family doctor before travelling to a malaria area.

10-14 days after the long Easter weekend is traditionally the highest peak of malaria cases in Zimbabwe. I say "traditionally" because with climate and rainfall changes, so the patterns of diseases are changing. But as families take to destinations in the lower altitudes of the country such as Kariba, Vic Falls, Mana Pools and the Lowveld and many return to rural areas from Harare or Bulawayo, the chances of contracting malaria increase.

There is an ABCD for prevention of malaria. This is:

Awareness of the risk of malaria in the area where you live or are travelling to
Bite prevention
Chemoprophylaxis or antimalarial medication-taking it exactly as prescribed
Diagnosis and prompt treatment

AWARENESS OF THE RISK

The risk may vary depending on where you are going and where you are staying, i.e. the risk is greater camping than sleeping in an air-conditioned hotel. Different countries have different types of malaria with different sensitivities to the antimalarial drugs. Always check with your doctor to find out which specific antimalarial drug will give you the best coverage.

BITE PREVENTION

No chemoprophylactic drug is 100% effective (especially if not taken correctly) so taking measures not to be bitten by mosquitoes is essential.

The mosquitoes which transmit malaria commonly fly from dusk to dawn and therefore evenings and nights are the most dangerous time for transmission. You should use an effective

insect repellent on clothing and skin. Diethyltoluamide (DEET) is safe and scientifically tested as the most effective insect repellent. It can safely be sprayed on clothes. A 20% concentration of DEET lasts up to three hours, 30% lasts up to six hours and 50% lasts up to twelve hours. There is no further increase in duration of protection beyond a concentration of 50% (and it will melt your watchstrap). DEET can be used on babies and children over 2 months of age. In addition, DEET can be used in a concentration of up to 50% if you are pregnant. When both sunscreen and DEET are required, the DEET should be applied after the sunscreen.

If practical, you should try to cover up bare areas with long-sleeved, loose-fitting clothing, long trousers and socks.

Sleeping in air-conditioned rooms reduces the risk of mosquito bites. Doors, windows and other entrances should be screened with fine mesh to prevent entry of mosquitoes and before dusk rooms should be sprayed with an insecticide (usually pyrethroid) to kill any mosquitoes that have entered during the day. Burning mosquito coils is helpful but they are not as effective as pyrethroid-releasing electric heated pads.

The efficacy of herbal remedies such as Citronella and Papaya leaves, or ingesting vitamin B6, in preventing mosquito bites or infection by the malaria parasite has not been demonstrated in scientific tests and they are not recommended.

ANTIMALARIAL MEDICATION (CHEMOPROPHYLAXIS)

Antimalarial medication helps to prevent malaria or, if you get malaria, will help prevent you from developing severe life-threatening complications. The best medication to take depends on the country you visit as the type of parasite varies in different parts of the world. In some areas, the parasite has become resistant to certain medications. Some overseas medical aid programs will cover the cost of anti-malarial medicines. The type of medication best for you will also depend on your own medical history of allergies and other medications you are taking so it is important that you consult your doctor before every trip. You must take the medication exactly as advised. The most common reason for malaria to develop in travellers is that the antimalarial medication has not been taken correctly.

1. Atovaquone/Proguanil (Mellanil, Malarone, Riamet)

By far the most effective and easiest tolerated but expensive (although much cheaper than treating malaria and

BE CONTENT

Our Bible story comes from the book of 1 Kings. A long time ago in Israel, there was a wicked king named Ahab who didn't love God. One day Ahab looked out his palace window and saw the beautiful vineyard that belonged to his neighbour, Naboth. King Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard. He wanted it so much that he felt like he just had to have it!

So the king said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden. It's so beautiful, and it's close to my palace, too. I'll give you a better vineyard, or I'll pay you for this one." But Naboth didn't want a different vineyard. He told King Ahab, "This vineyard has belonged to my family since we first came to this land. I could never give it up! It was given to me by the Lord."



Naboth's answer made King Ahab mad! He was the king and was used to getting what he wanted! So King Ahab went back to his palace and pouted. Greed tore at Ahab's heart. He even refused to eat.



King Ahab was wicked, but his wife, Queen Jezebel, was even worse! When she heard why Ahab was pouting, she came up with an evil plan to get Naboth's land. She arranged a holiday and had Naboth sit across from two dishonest men. The men pointed to Naboth and told everyone that he'd said bad things about God and the king. The men lied about Naboth until the people became angry, took Naboth away, and killed him.

When Ahab learned that Naboth was dead, he took over the vineyard, just as he'd wanted to. Jezebel's evil plan had worked! But God told His prophet Elijah to go and talk to Ahab. God had a message for the wicked king! "Because you took part in Jezebel's evil plan," Elijah told Ahab, "God will bring disaster on you and your family. None of your children will be great rulers, and you'll die in dishonour." All that Elijah said came true.

Have you ever wanted something that belonged to someone else? Have you ever wanted that thing even more when you realized you couldn't have it? Did you pout like King Ahab?

In the New Testament Paul wrote these words to the Philippians. *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."* The interesting thing is that Paul wrote these words when he was in prison. Even in the hardest times Paul had learned the secret of being content with God. You can be content and happy when you know that God is always with you and that you don't need things to make you happy. True happiness is knowing that God loves you!

Chrissie and her husband Dave are Pastors at Harvest Christian Fellowship.



Kids Page



Elijah & Naboth's Vineyard

1. What did Naboth have that King Ahab wanted?



2. How did King Ahab feel about Naboth telling him no?



3. Who helped King Ahab get it?



4. How did King Ahab get the vineyard?



5. Did God like what King Ahab and Jezebel did to get the vineyard?



Dear Lord, Please forgive me for always wanting more and for not being grateful for all that You have given me. Help me to be happy knowing that the greatest thing I have is YOU! Amen

FOR PARENTS: CONTENTMENT IS CHOOSING TO BE GRATEFUL IN MY CIRCUMSTANCES, RELATIONSHIPS AND POSSESSIONS!

Jehosheba's Story

by Sas Kirk

Photograph by Mary -Anne Passaportis

The story of Judah's youngest king, Joash, is found in the book of 2 Kings chapter 11 and 2 Chronicles chapters 22 and 23. The story reads like a Grimm's fairy-tale with its conflicts of ruthlessness and compassion, betrayal and loyalty. But its greatest value lies in how it foreshadows the story of God's gift of His Son, the One Who is our perfect King.

The woman stood silently in the shadows by the door of the inner room, watching the rise and fall of the blanket that covered the two boys sleeping before her. Joash slept with his arm flung carelessly above his head. Zechariah was curled carefully balanced on the edge of the cot as if already making way for this boy who would be king. By the doorway, Jehosheba stared hungrily at the two as if desperate to capture this moment of their childhood to sustain her through the rest of her life. Tomorrow everything would change. Tomorrow Joash turned seven. A rustling from behind caught her attention and gratefully she unclenched her taut fists and her breath escaped in a sigh. The physical presence of her husband eased her tension. His spiritual presence stilled her thoughts. After long moments of silence as the two watched the sleeping boys, Jehosheba spoke softly, "Does it have to be tomorrow, Jehoiada? Can't we wait another year?" She knew the answer to her question already but she wanted to hear the steady voice of the man she revered above any other. Jehoiada was her husband, he was also the most faithful of Jehovah's priests and tomorrow he would be the most courageous man in the Kingdom of Judah. Jehoiada did not reply immediately as he was sensitive to his wife's deep anxiety for

this little boy who slept in blissful childish safety. But his voice carried conviction and invited no contradiction. "Queen Athaliah's influence grows daily. Already I have reports of more high places being built to her gods. Entire villages are being annihilated because a few faithful people in them refuse to bow to Baal. Families have turned against each other in fear of her retaliation if she and her priests are not obeyed. Tomorrow, King David's true heir must take his place as King of Judah, to fulfil our part of the covenant between God and His chosen people. Tomorrow Athaliah's reign must end."

Jehosheba shuddered at the mention of the Queen's name. Engulfed by a vision of screaming, blood and murder, she was suddenly transported back to the horror of the night when she had rescued Joash. Judah's King Ahaziah was dead, slain by the Israelite Jehu.

As soon as Athalia had heard of her son's death, she had swept into the palace in Jerusalem. She herself was a princess of Israel and ambitious to the point of ruthlessness. She had orchestrated the slaughter of every one of Ahazia's offspring, her own grandchildren, so that she would gain sole reign over the southern kingdom. In the chaos and confusion of the bloodbath, Jehosheba had snatched the infant Joash, Ahaziah's youngest son, and had fled for refuge to the temple. For seven years, she and Jehoiada had hidden the young prince in the temple, safe from the bloodstained hands of his own grandmother. Whilst he was in fact her nephew, son of her brother, the slain King Ahaziah, the boy Joash had become much more. He was as much a son to her as was

her own boy, Zechariah with whom he shared his childhood and the bed that cradled them tonight.

Jehosheba leant against her husband to help banish the horror of her memories. She knew that there was no other way. Judah's rightful king must be placed on the throne again. Tomorrow Jehoiada would crown him and place a copy of the covenant in his hand, whilst guards and priests protected them. Already forces were in place, even here in the temple. King Joash - how ludicrous the title seemed for such a small lad! And what if he too failed as so many of Judah's monarchy had? What if he succumbed to the corruption that led so many of David's ancestors astray? Jehosheba's thoughts raced frantically. Why did the southern kingdom always seem to fail? What had happened to the covenant? Why did Jehovah Almighty seem so far and so silent?

"He's just a boy, Jehoiada, a weak and fallible little boy. He may fail as king." As if in acknowledgement, on the bed Joash stirred and murmured in his sleep. The murmur sounded like a warning and Jehosheba then turned frantically to Jehoiada, "What of our own son? What of Zechariah and his future?"

Jehoiada was slow to answer. He was ashamed to admit that he had his own fears and doubts about Judah's future with any king. He longed for peace in the kingdom and for righteous rule, and he yearned to see covenant obedience in a ruler. "Zechariah is destined to be a priest and to represent the will of God on earth. Joash is destined to be king to fulfil the

words of the psalmist about King David: "His line will continue forever and his throne will endure before me like the sun."* Both will be fulfilling what God has ordained and yes, both will fail to be the perfect king or the perfect priest... Suddenly Jehoiada stopped. Like light pouring into a dark room, revelation flooded into him and his heart thudded in excitement. He swung to face Jehosheba and gripped her shoulders in his excitement. "I see it now, Jehosheba, the combination is the answer..." He laughed and his words flew from his lips so fast that Jehosheba could not understand. She stared at her husband as if he were mad and then pulled him away so that he would not wake the boys. Snatching at the words that were spilling from him, she tried to make sense of his exuberant outpourings.

"What do you mean a combination of the two? Which two? Joash and Zechariah, ruling together? Jehoiada, I don't understand!"

Joy still filled his face but his eyes softened and focused on his wife. "It is there in Scripture and in all these years I did not understand. Our father Abraham met Melchizedek for a reason. The priestly King of Salem represented the best of the covenant that God made with His people. He represented the One who would be perfect King and perfect Priest, not for a decade, but for eternity. Don't you see, Jehosheba? We do all of this to secure the throne for an earthly king for a short period. But one day Jehovah Almighty will secure His throne forever with One who will be our King-Priest. And his reign will be faultless and his rule will be for eternity. Can you imagine it, Jehosheba? A faultless King to rule in justice for all time? A spotless Priest to bring us into the presence of God? This is the future that is our assurance." Jehosheba listened in amazement. Could this be the Almighty's answer to her fears for her boys? She bowed her head and allowed her mind to capture the truth of Jehoiada's words. In the midnight quiet of a simple room within the temple residence, torchlight flickered a blurred outline of two sleeping boys, one destined to be Judah's new king, one destined to be her priest. And finally their mother smiled as she looked at them because she had a glimpse of the greatest King, the Highest Priest. And her soul was at peace.

*Psalm 89:4

Sas Kirk is a Counsellor at Chisipite Senior School.

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